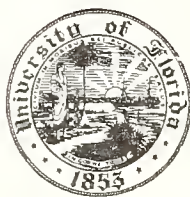



HOW *Good* IS YOUR
Taste?

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How Good Is Your Taste?



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HOW *Good* IS YOUR
Taste?

by

S A N F O R D

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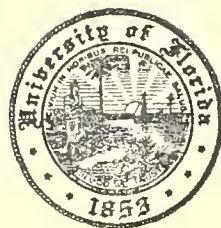
G E R A R D

Introduction by

FRANK CROWNINSHIELD

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FIRST EDITION

To Petie and Tempe

The Author-is-indebted Department

Most authors are indebted. This one is no exception. It's fortunate that the debts are the kind that cannot be repaid, because there are plenty of them! They consist of great kindnesses extended by many busy and important people. Advertising art directors of big agencies and impressive stores, editors of slick magazines and smart trade journals, artists, artisans, designers, decorators, manufacturers, galleries, and professional writers threw open their files and gave up their time to help make this book.

First credit goes to Petie, known formally as Mrs. Gerard. She did all the research—a large part of the effort.

Ideas, moral support, and “guinea-pigging” came from:

The Art Department
The Copy Department
The Research Department

of several large advertising agencies.

You will be spared many awkward sentences and unfortunate utterances due to the advice of Miss Rosemary Lesan, writer, who has my heartfelt thanks.

Miss Lucy Perry, Mr. Leonard Levin, Mr. Anton Kamp, Mr. I. Steinberg, Mr. Robert Smith, were also very helpful.

Paul Brosseau did the lettering for the jacket and title page. Elsewhere mention is made of Jerry Mullen, whose script letters appear in the titles for Section Three, and Frank Conley, who is well represented in Section Two.

The photographs came from a great number of sources. Some twenty-five of the objects are in the possession of the author or his friends. Others are in museums, or were once a part of collections dispersed by art and auction galleries or by large stores. Magazines contributed heavily.

The practice of attaching credit lines to identify sources could not be followed for obvious reasons. Accordingly contributors are revealed only in the upside-down captions or here. The following individuals and organizations were outstandingly useful and generous; so much so that it would be repetitious to spell their names out in association with each of the dozens of examples they provided:

PARKE-BERNET GALLERIES: Miss M. Vandergrift painstakingly unearthed and explained prints showing about forty of the lovely and very valuable things which have been shown in their catalogues. Incidentally, these catalogues taken together almost represent an encyclopaedia of the world's greatest objects of art.

ANTIQUES MAGAZINE: It is hoped that the exhaustive files of this most excellent magazine will recover from the raids Miss Alice Winchester so kindly authorized. They may forgive me if you mention my name when sending in your subscription.

MACY'S, NEW YORK: Margaret Fishback used to write "No one is in debt to Macy's." I am pleased to say that that is changed now. I am in debt to Macy's and to Ben Harvey Lipson, their art director. He helped us get pictures of some antiques and many fine contemporary pieces.

FURNITURE WORLD: In the person of Mr. N. I. Bienenstock, an authority on American (and other) furniture, this interesting trade publication provided advice and pictures—both good.

THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, in New York

THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, Boston

THE PHILADELPHIA MUSEUM

THE NEWARK MUSEUM, in Newark, New Jersey

THE ST. LOUIS MUSEUM

THE LOS ANGELES COUNTY MUSEUM

THE AMERICAN ART ASSOCIATION

Each of these organizations is responsible for several of the better items shown.

AMERICAN HOME: Miss Marion Mayer lent time and very swell examples of "conversion jobs."

HAMMER GALLERIES: Responsible for several excellent antiques.

SELRITE, INC.: Represented by several excellent examples of maple furniture.

The foregoing contributed the greatest bulk of the photographs. Their service is acknowledged elsewhere from time to time when the source seems of peculiar interest. The many other less prolific sources are usually identified in the captions.

Some pictures, unfortunately, cannot be credited because they came through several hands without identification. My apologies and my thanks to such anonymous benefactors!

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Introduction

BY FRANK CROWNINSHIELD

There is a story to the effect that Renoir once said to Cézanne: "How can you wear that cravat? Can't you see that it is in bad taste?" To which Cézanne replied: "If it were in bad taste, I would not wear it."

The effectiveness of such criticisms is even less—and the risk far greater—when directed at a lady. Tell a woman that you do not like her hat or hair-do, and she will, perhaps, forgive you; but tell her that they are in bad taste, and you will certainly have begun one of the bitterest enmities of your life.

For the fact is that women—and men, for that matter—believe equally in the subtlety of their personality and the infallibility of their taste, and will persist in those hallucinations with the most cunning tenacity. In the case of the men, it would, for example, be highly unwise to inform a major magnate of the movies that his aesthetic sense is, approximately, that of a Zulu, for the reason that, in Hollywood, they keep rails, and feathers, and barrels of tar for precisely such occasions.

But Sanford E. Gerard, the author of these beguiling and self-revealing quizzes, is on far safer ground when he sets about correcting the blind spots in our taste, for the reason that, very craftily, he does so from the ambush of a printed book.

I remember, merely to illustrate the point, that in reading the author's questionnaires,

when they were in manuscript form, I was shocked to see how often my taste had been at fault. But, despite the shame which that discovery caused me, I still continued speaking to Mr. Gerard, both at first nights and cocktail parties, whereas, if he had accused me of the same lapses—viva voce and face to face—I might well have plunged a dagger in his breast.

While admitting the extraordinary competence of this handbook and the immense service it is certain to render a groping and bewildered people, I still cannot help regretting that the author, for all his encyclopedic knowledge, has offered us no solution to a problem which is every day maddening more and more hostesses; namely, how to decorate their rooms, not with the right objects, but the right people.

I have in mind, of course, those select and blessed beings who seem to bring color and comfort and good will into whatever rooms they deign, however transiently, to decorate. While there are, I am afraid, no charts or graphs; no five easy lessons; no list of magical telephone numbers to solve that knotty problem, it remains true that, in a general way, charming rooms have a way of attracting charming people; dreary rooms, dreary people; messy rooms, messy people; arty rooms, arty people, and so on, *ad infinitum*.

I might, however, almost in disproof of that

generalization, cite the instance of a rich Chicago lady I once knew, who, after being taught the differences between the styles of Louis XIV, Regence, Louis XV, Directoire Empire, and Restoration, finally imported, from France, a noble suite of Empire rooms.

Unhappily, however, she found herself unable to coax any guests into her salons save a few of her husband's friends who, regrettably, were more interested in the sanguinary goings-on at the stockyards than in any evidences of Napolcon's classical predilections. And, merely to make her lot more intolerable, her husband soon selected the Savonnerie carpet in her black-and-gold music room as a fairway from which to practice niblick shots, after fixing upon a nude figure of Venus—in a Gobelin tapestry—as a proper target to aim at. It is tragedies of that general order that are transforming American hostesses into depressives of the definitely manic, or suicidal, type.

It will be seen that though Mr. Gerard believes the mere act of living in beautiful rooms inevitably tends to increase whatever virtues may be inherent in us, he has failed to add, as a logical corollary, that the necessity of living with hideous objects in a gloomy interior tends not only to poison our thoughts but, actually, to subvert our morals.

I well recall seeing an unequaled aggregation of such poisoning decorative objects when they were on display at the famous and still widely discussed Exhibition of Bad Taste, held in New York, a little before World War I.

Though it was Ruby Ross Wood, the decorator, who had not only conceived the project but collected many of the exhibits, it was Elsie de Wolfe, Edna Woolman Chase, May Wilson Preston, Franklin P. Adams, Will Irwin, and I who composed the Board of Judges. I remember that though we had no difficulty in awarding our first prize to a plaster figure of the Venus de Milo, with a clock in her stomach, it was only after a little discussion that we allocated our second medal of honor to a pair of puce-colored pillow shams on a black walnut bed, and embroidered (in turkey red worsted) with the word "Mr." on one sham, and "Mrs." on the other.

I have heard people swear that it was the sight of those very shams that gave Clare Briggs the idea for his human, witty, and still continuing "Mr. and Mrs." cartoons; and that they were likewise responsible for the incredible custom now prevalent among American manufacturers of marking towels, drinking glasses, washrags, napkin rings, and, for all I know, pajamas and toothbrushes, with the words "His" and "Hers."

And here it occurs to me to suggest that since we have everywhere instituted courts of justice to punish crimes against the law, we might do well to establish a court of decorators whose function it would be to punish crimes against taste, crimes often so heinous that they disrupt friendships, blight the lives of children, drive strong men to drink, and turn the most promising parties into puddles of uncomfortable people wistfully eying the door.

That august tribunal might begin their operations by imposing small fines for ugly sofas; large fines for ugly rooms; ten years for a vulgar house; ten dollars for a vulgar hat, and a mere judicial reprimand for a vulgar cravat. Two difficulties, however, would, I am afraid, be in our way—the inadequacy of housing units in our prisons, and the danger of precipitating a second Civil War.

And, after all, it would be somewhat inhuman to multiply the burdens of American decorators, since they have certainly suffered enough in having, all their lives, been forced to harmonize discordant rooms, objects, colors, styles, and materials merely to satisfy clients whose ignorance of the laws of balance, measure, elegance, and line is both abysmal and ingrained.

Before closing this, I am afraid, inadequate word of introduction, I might mention another vulnerable point in Mr. Gerard's armor; namely, that though he has paid some passing attention to the bedroom—its decoration and general character—he has not accorded it the measure of study it really deserves, for the reason that the bedroom is, actually, more a temple, or sanctuary for the spirit, than simply a place to sleep. Indeed we would do well to

remember that a wise man has said that "the only perfect climate is bed."

There is another point to remember: that, more than any other room in the house, the bedroom provides us with the most unerring index to the character of its occupant. To prove that contention I might recite the case of a young friend of mine who, twenty years ago (shortly after graduating from Harvard), became insanely bent on marrying a girl I knew to be in every way unworthy of him.

With the idea of opening his eyes to her truly frightening character, and showing him that marriage with such a woman would merely be a foretaste of hell, I took him, secretly, to her bedroom and without a word of comment pointed out to him, among other objects, the following incriminating miscellanea: (1) a porcelain, bedside ash tray fashioned in the form of a human skull; (2) a writing chair the

legs of which were composed of buffalo horns; (3) a horseshoe, hung with a mauve ribbon, over her bathroom door; (4) a series of faded and battered dance programs, stuck irregularly into her cheval glass; (5) a small onyx bowl, half filled with combings; (6) an elaborately framed photograph of a Hungarian nobleman who, as I happened to know, had jilted her the year before; and, finally, (7) a crimson satin, tufted and buttoned Belter sofa supporting a fat pillow, stuffed with pine needles and bearing the words, in raised embroidery: "I pine for you, and bawl some."


I need hardly say that the young man soon saw the light or that he has, for twenty years, lived in rapture with another bride, a paragon, I might add, who could correctly answer any, or all, of Mr. Gerard's diabolical, sixty-four-dollar questions.

How Good Is Your Taste?

How to Tell a Taste




It's Really Very Easy




Your taste is simply what you like. It's good or bad only in relation to the opinions of those around you. The people who think your taste is bad are snobs or stuffed shirts. The people whose taste you think is bad are vulgar. As they are both quite wrong about things, there was no sense in laying out good money for this book. That is, unless you belong to that wonderful group of Americans who are on the way up and keep improving their taste constantly. That's the little group comprising only one hundred and forty million people. They are the Americans who see something good every day and work to achieve it, only to lay it aside for something better tomorrow.

Of course some of these people lay things aside for something better more often than others. They are the ones who want to advance faster than is good for them. They would be happier if they didn't care how good their taste was and they might have more money in the bank. These people are my favorite Americans because I've been one all my life. I'm still worrying about my taste.

It's Really Very Difficult



Your taste is easy to define. But a standard criterion for good taste has defied great minds for centuries. Hogarth (1697-1764), a British painter, tried to do it. Nearest he came to a synthesis was to call a reverse curve like this  "the line of beauty." The ancient Greeks probably came very close to a basic tenet in a theory explained popularly to moderns for the first time in a book, *Dynamic Symmetry*, written by J. Hambidge and published in 1920 by the Yale University Press.

A clue to what is good taste seems to be contained in this work.

The ancient Greeks believed that enduring and satisfying beauty could be achieved only if the designers of temples and other public works adhered to a key, similar in a sense to keys as used by modern composers of music. Briefly stated, these keys consisted of a basic relationship between one dimension and another. For example, if one dimension of a rectangle was one unit (like one foot) the other according to the Greeks should be 1.618 units (or $1^{618/1000}$ feet). These ratios never came out even.

Take that 1 to 1.618 ratio, for instance. It was an obsession with the ancient Greeks and (apparently) with the even more ancient Egyptians. If you multiply 1 by 1.618 you get 1.618. Multiply 1.618 by 1.618 and you get 2.618. Continue this way and you have a whole column of the kind of figures that gave me nightmares in eighth grade. (Still do.) Cut down to only three figures after the decimal they look about like this:

1.
1.618
2.618
4.236
6.853
11.090
17.944

It is claimed that a spiral shell grows in a curve related to this arithmetical series, that leaves and seeds and flowers can be proved to adhere to it, and that even rabbits multiply in the same rhythm. (This I cannot vouch for, having never seen a litter of 6.853848 rabbits.)

Frustrating as all this may be to students of arithmetic, it may be a clue to taste.

Nature is never absolute—always irregular; uneven. The Greeks imitated nature; gave people what they were accustomed to and seem to have been enormously successful. They went further: they picked a ratio and stuck to it long enough so that people were accustomed to *that* ratio. We can imagine the “Guild of Temple Builders” initiating a new member into the mystery: “Now, my boy, remember this formula and you’re in: 1 to 1.618 and the client will always buy your design!” In an attempt to prove that people will always buy a natural (i.e., irregular) formula which *they* are accustomed to as against:

1. An irregular formula which they are *not* accustomed to—and
2. A regular formula which they are accustomed to—

the author presented the rectangles shown at the bottom of page 19 to 309 people with very interesting and illuminating results. Eighty-one artists and 228 laymen were asked

to choose their favorite. (Before reading further, you might choose the shape you like best.) The results were as follows: the group as a whole voted heavily for “B.” This happens to be the shape of a typical magazine, *Life*. Its ratio is 1 to 1.32. It is irregular and very familiar to us. Second choice was “A.” It’s irregular—constructed in the proportion most favored by the old Greeks, but not especially familiar to us. “C” (a bad third) is familiar; but the most regular shape we know—the square. Its ratio, of course, is one to one.

This test was basic.

Normal reactions to basic matters in design (balance, imbalance; rhythm, et cetera) do not depend on experience. Tests designed to measure innate taste are interesting chiefly because they may reveal a potentially great sensitivity to complex problems, the problems which are solved more or less successfully by artists and craftsmen.

Ability to make correct decisions where complex relationships of shapes and areas are involved requires experience. A great deal of experience results in the development of what we may conveniently call *sophistication*. To a child any horse is a wonderful and beautiful thing; to a horseman this horse is a hack, that one a thoroughbred. That’s experience. If the horseman knows about dogs, too, he’s two rungs up on the ladder toward sophistication.



It's Really Almost Impossible

The first two sections of this book consist of tests intended to gauge your taste potentiality (basic taste) and your taste experience (sophistication).

That sounds very scientific and absolute. It isn't. At least it is no more absolute than a machine would be if the functioning of that machine depended on a fallible human action at one point in its cycle. There's a “human” element in taste determination, too, and it's just as likely to cause a breakdown in the “machinery.” The “human” element is really a double one—time and place.

What is good now? And here? Where is here? And what is good of what, here, and now?

Who says so?

Well, in general the people you have to live with say so! To attempt to decorate your home in a manner radically different from the homes of your circle of friends is equivalent to stepping out of your circle of friends and joining another circle! While conforming to the style rules laid down by your *locality* or your *economic level*, you may with impunity buy *better* things, but they must be the same kind of things your neighbors have.

America consists of many localities and economic levels. Within each, in a curious interwoven and overlapping pattern, there exist many schools of taste. This does not make for disunity. But it does add variety. That's good. If everyone liked antiques there wouldn't be enough chairs to sit on! And Grand Rapids could be given back to Paul Bunyan! And if no one had the courage to buy the products of new inventive designers there would be no conventional articles for tomorrow's conservatives and for day-after-tomorrow's antique fanciers.

The third section of the book tries to determine what *kind* of a taste group you move in, or prefer.



Let's Try It, Anyway!

Each section is coded to enable you to quickly determine your score. In each of the first two you will be graded as having Bad, Fair, or Excellent taste and assigned a number from one to three. Nine combinations of these numbers are possible.

In the third part of the book you will acquire another number. These numbers run from one to twelve. If you refer to the back of the book you will find twelve kinds of taste described and, under each description, nine paragraphs varying in accordance with the degree of taste and sophistication you seem to have.

All the tests in the book have been carefully checked for accuracy. They have been submitted to groups of experts and to large samples of the lay public. The object which you are told is the preferred one was in each case the almost unanimous choice of the experts—and the less unanimous, but obvious, favorite of the public. No test was permitted to remain in the book if the two groups did not agree.

A description of each item will be found on the opposite page. These paragraphs are printed upside down and should not be referred to until all the tests in any section are taken.



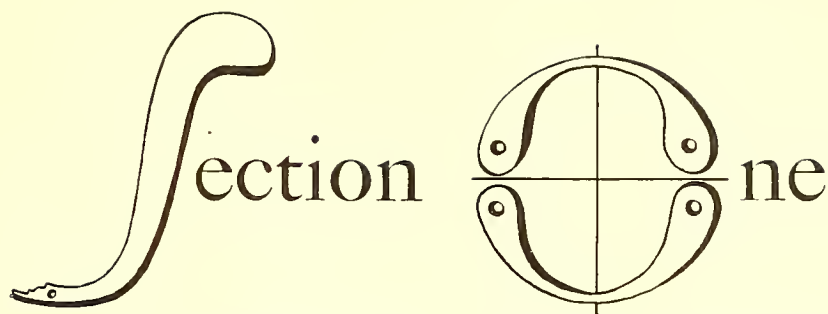
A



B



C



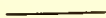
A brief review of the rectangle situation shows that people like rectangles *familiar* and *irregular*. This is an example of absolutely fundamental taste.

Countless similar examples could be advanced. An object which is normally seen in one position makes a strange and less attractive design if drawn upside down.



An oval is more interesting than a circle. A cloud is more interesting than either.

Taste that is less fundamental, but still basic, is involved if we add other objects to the original one to form a simple pattern. One drumbeat is arresting but not pleasing. A series of drumbeats in an irregular but repetitive pattern is pleasing and stimulating. Substitute one exclamation point—!—for one drumbeat. Then place a series in a row like this: —!—!!!!—!—!!!!—!—!!!!—!—!!!! The resulting pattern is less startling but more interesting. A simple line



is not pleasing or interesting. If you lay another line across it at right angles



you form a cross, a figure which bemused primitive man for ages before it achieved special significance as the symbol of Christianity.

The rectangle or the cross or the oval is a shape.

Repetition of any of them forms a pattern.

Turning a shape upside down involves position.

If you produce a pattern in which a shape is alternately in one position, then another, you have a design. Introduce a new shape right side up or otherwise and the design becomes complex! But you are still in the realm of basic taste!

The simplest artistic performance consists of the division of a shape into two shapes or the arrangement of two objects (like the lines which formed the cross).

To appreciate even the most high-flown and exalted art, especially that which is destined to last, you should have a normal taste in simple shapes and their relationships to one another.

On the following pages simple arrangements are offered in groups of three. Select the one preferred from each trio.

If you bothered to read the Introduction you might as well forget that Greek abracadabra with the numbers. It will only throw you off in your decisions. Modern Americans can differ from ancient Greeks. And besides, how can you tell which of the patterns (if any) is based on the old formulas?

Don't ponder over your decisions. Your first reaction probably will be the right one.

DIVIDED RECTANGLE

in front of a wall and estimate the middle point (between floor and ceiling). Now measure. You will have guessed too high. The eye likes its middles high. The middle in "B" is really middle but looks low. No one seriously objects to an equal vertical division so "M" is second best. Incidentally, if you turned "S" upside down, "M" would be first and "B" second. People don't like darks at the top of things.

As you walk across a field in the country the amount of (light) sky in proportion to (dark) ground which your eye takes in is about the same as the areas in the middle rectangle, "S." Perhaps the fact that it is one of the most familiar arrangements makes it the most popular of many tested by the author. This might lead you to think that "B" would take second place. It didn't; for another interesting reason. Stand

A UNIT WITHIN A UNIT

esting to find out whether Oriental reading habits influence Chinese and Japanese eyes to fall elsewhere, and if this has had an effect on Oriental art. I leave it to future researchers to find out. Women with college educations (and men without them) went all to pieces on this test; groups in which the sexes and education were reversed did well for goodness knows what reason! Just thought you'd like to know.

Rectangle "A" has its little box annoyingly centered, while the box within "I" is aggravating because it's a little off center to the right. Both have their character "a" placed too low in the boxes. In rectangle "C" all is well because the little "a" is appropriately contained and because the box is placed at the spot where the human eye first comes to rest on a blank piece of paper; high and to the left. It would be inter-

ARRANGEMENT OF TWO UNITS

very badly, doubtless because of the common distaste for uncertainty in anything. The club, you see, is almost certain to fall to the left. Two other things are wrong to a normal taste. The arrow points to nothing, and both the arrow and the club end at the middle of the rectangle. One or two artists with very advanced taste picked "D" and "S" because they were bored with correctness. This does not excuse you.

The well-educated women did even worse on this (in case you need consoling). They scattered their votes equally for each design. "O" was almost unanimously preferred by artists and heavily favored by all the others. The club balances interestingly in "O" and the arrow helps to complete a line which staggers in a pleasant manner through the rectangle. The supine club in "D" was next choice. "S" did



M



S



B



C



I



A



S



D



O

MOVEMENT

"D" was a good second choice because it's bisymmetrical, a thing no one actively dislikes. Especially anyone who has been to college. They loved it. It would have been first choice had they had their way. Laymen (non-college) and artists were neck and neck in their heavy preference for the winner, "T." A related but not necessarily interesting fact is that women artists scattered their votes pretty badly.

"D" is a thing sitting solidly on its base with a line which can't make up its mind going nowhere behind it. And "K" is a thing in that same sad state which bothered you in the last series. It's falling over. And the line is still not getting anywhere. But "T," which is none too pretty either, could be a top and its cord. The cord spirals quite nicely to its logical destination and the destination is spinning on its point.

NEW CONSTELLATIONS

when divided up and down or sideways comes to about the same thing. "L" was a very bad second. It would have done better had all the stars been the same size, and less well had the big stars been at the top. "I" got scarcely any votes at all, being constructed almost on a diagonal (very bad, things on a diagonal; but almost on a diagonal is even worse). If you picked "I" you must be perverse.

If you had any trouble with this one you should just hate yourself. Even the educated women were able to cope with it. Surprisingly they scored not one miss—better score than any other group. And everyone else did well. The winning rectangle is "C" and its structure is called, by the profound, "informal balance." That means that although nothing is directly opposed to its mate, the weight of the elements

TWO OBJECTS AND TWO AREAS

ferred "H" (as who wouldn't)? Their second choice was "E." "N" was a very bad third. This is the correct order, but non-college laymen, female, voted "N" first—while artists, female, didn't give it a vote! It is, of course, the design lousy, transcending several rules by being off balance, constructed on a diagonal, and having the pips placed unfortunately with regard to the upper section of the rectangle. These things make it about the worst of the bad choices.

I'm fond of the non-college laymen, male. They are so reliable. This little set of simple designs threw various groups of highly touted and highly specialized people such as writers and editors and just women into wild deviations. The laymen (N.C.) were not disturbed. They went their predictable course calmly favoring by a tidy margin the design which would win handily when the final count was in. An unspectacular group, but steady, they pre-



D



T



K



I



C



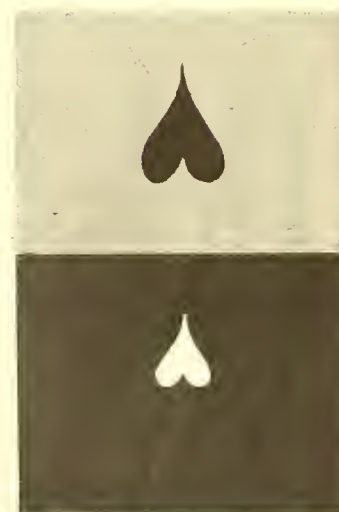
L



H



N



E

WHICH WINDSOR CHAIR LEG?

correct one) upside down. Vases look odd up-side down. You almost never find them so used except when two are placed bottom to bottom. Windsor chairs were working chairs, used on rough floors and outdoors on brick terraces. That's why they had such a very long foot. As it wore off slowly there was still enough foot to look well. "V" would wear down to an odd little ball foot. Functionalism has been practiced for years; accounts for much of our taste.

It didn't seem to me that the difference between "G" and "P" was enough to be obvious until people started choosing. No other bad choice was so consistently avoided as "G." You never saw a leg like it, of course, because wood turners are not in the habit of grinding a whole leg down to leave that one little protuberance sticking out! And they don't put two identical vases together so prominently. At that it's nearer being right than "V"—which is "P" (the

WHICH CHURCH?

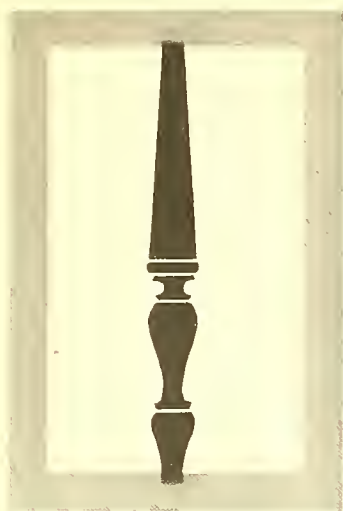
probably crush the church with its weight and so might "R"'s belfry. That's why you never saw a church quite like either, and why you don't care for them. There were no remarkable deviations from normal in the voting except that non-college laymen, female, preferred the second choice with the huge steeple very slightly over the first choice of everyone else. This group did least well throughout.

"L" and "A" were preferred, in that order. Personally, I prefer "R" to "A," but "R" received almost no votes. If the objects did not call to mind churches there would be no preference. The relationship of the masses is perfectly good in each case. It is conditioning which makes one look proper and the others odd. "L" has an adequate but not enormous belfry—big enough to swing a bell. "A"'s steeple would

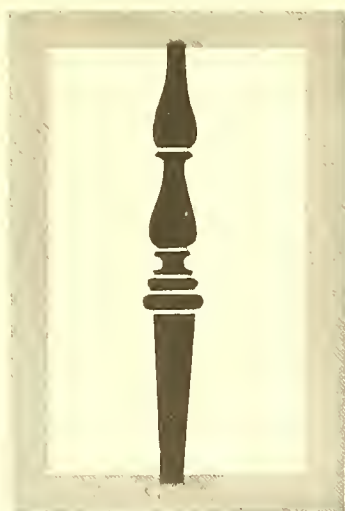
WHICH MONUMENT?

may, buildings planned with beauty in mind, such as the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, and countless others, together with most monuments and cenotaphs, slant in toward the top. This custom is so deeply ingrained in our sub-conscious that "L," with straight walls—but otherwise identical to "A" (first choice)—was a bad second in the series. "I"—with straight sides and three blocks each equal in height—was a very, very bad third.

Most walls from ancient days have been built with a certain amount of inward slant toward the top. In retaining walls, such as those backed with earth to form a fortification, this was necessary. It helped to prevent buckling and eventual disintegration. The slant was retained in temple walls built at a later date, possibly to keep the weight of the roof from pushing them outward, possibly because custom had already made a straight wall seem odd. Be that as it



V



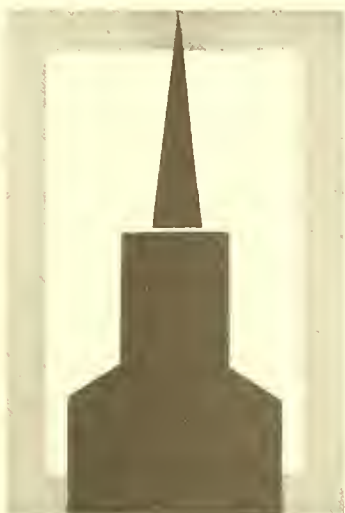
G



P



L



R



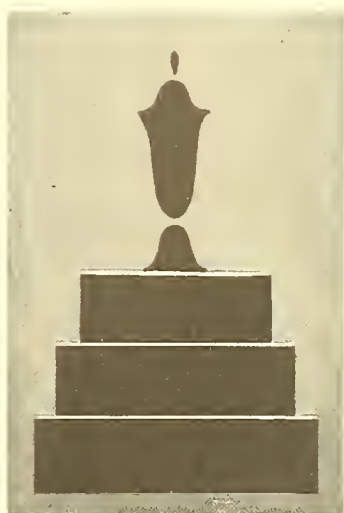
A



L



A



I

FABRICS

(Considered as Next to Each Other in One Room)

selected "D" in the belief (I suppose) that one can't go wrong with an ensemble! "D" is really the worst, and "L" is in the middle. Both combinations jitter. This is not a matter of conditioning but actual fatigue to the eye. Extremely contrasting patterns are exhausting in the same way that it is exhausting to follow a line through a spiral maze. It's ten to one you picked "I."

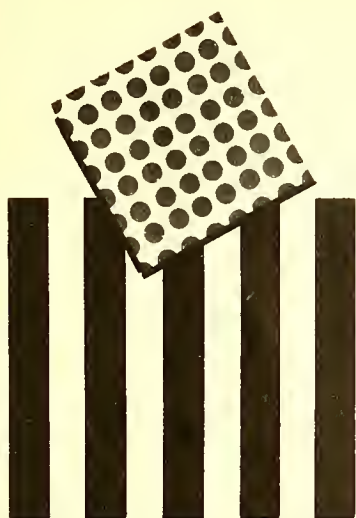
The results of this test were most entertaining. The bulk of the votes ran clearly from left to right as art consciousness decreased and self-consciousness increased. Artists, a reckless lot, voted quite heavily for "L" (although they gave "I" the final word). Self-assertive and imaginative individuals also frequently voted for "L." Intelligent milktoasts went heavily for "I," and people without brains, imagination, or courage (so far as I was able to judge) cravenly

COLUMNS

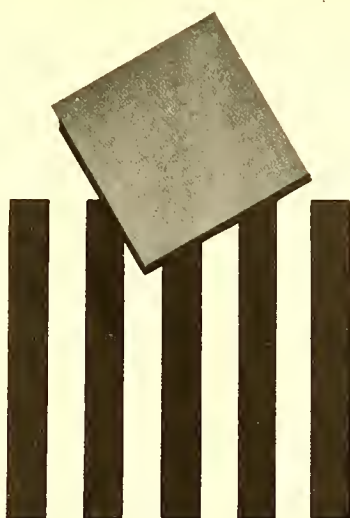
(Not Pilasters)

series; male artists did not cast one errant vote for "G" and very few for "E." "E" was a pretty good second because pilasters (half columns, flat against walls) commonly go straight all the way to the top. "E" does seem to bulge at the top, however, doesn't it? "G" was offensive to nearly everyone. It is structurally unsound, having much less strength than either "N" or "E." Nature never dwindles in the middle!

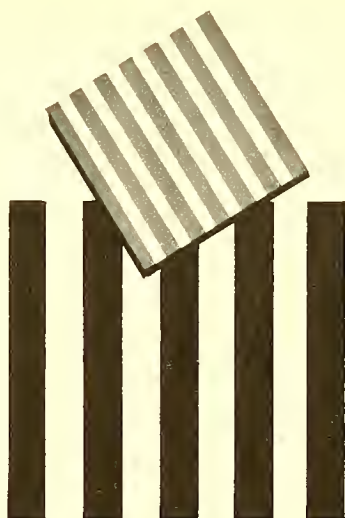
This test is similar to the one on monuments, so you know by now that the right selection is the one which curves inward toward the top. Architects may complain that the curve is too abrupt. It had to be made so to be obvious, and it served its purpose, because butchers and tailors and delivery boys who knew nothing of the theory of art greatly preferred "N." So did everyone else. Men did particularly well in this



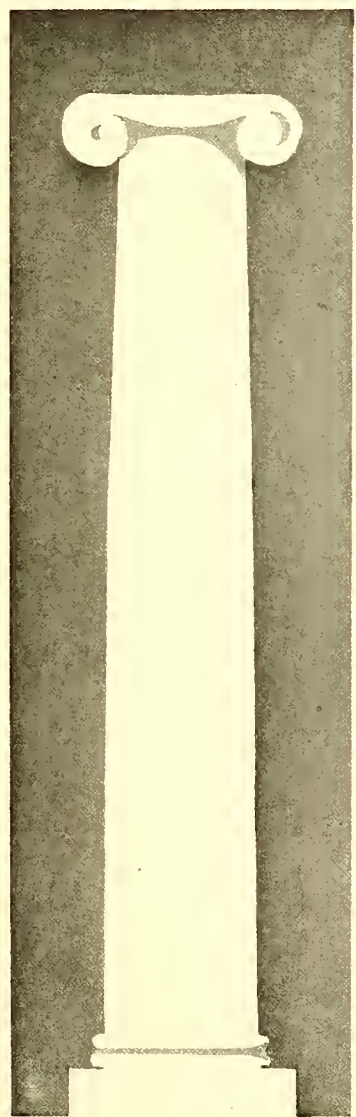
L



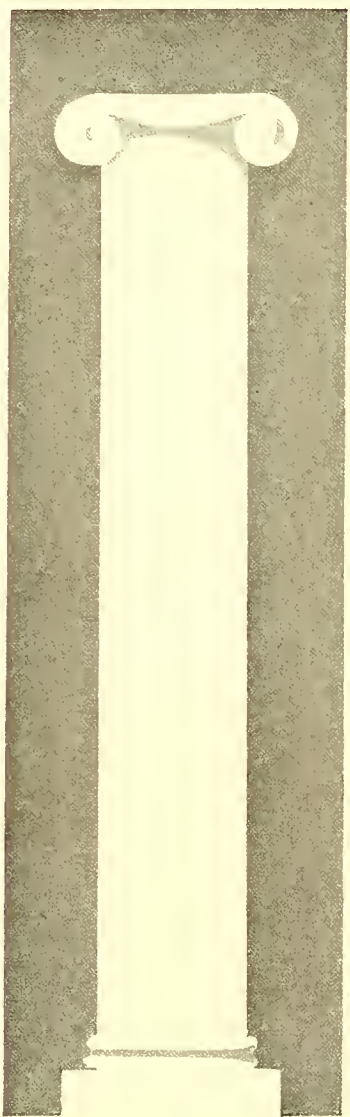
I



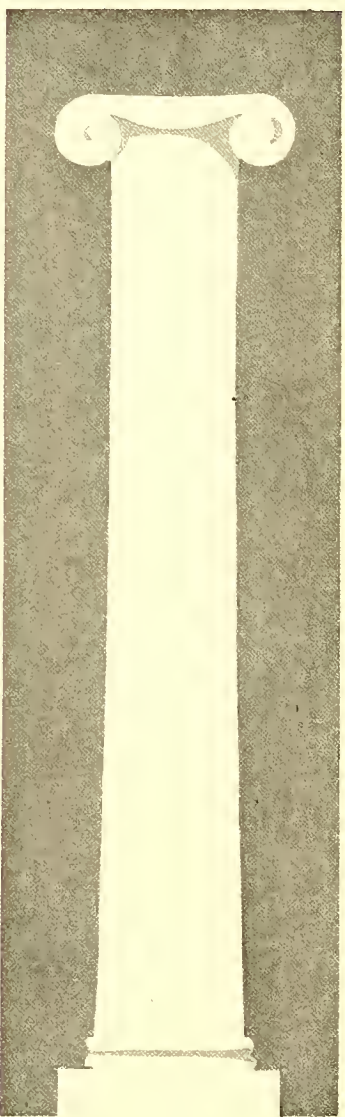
D



N



E



G

TWO TREES AND A HOUSE AS AN ABSTRACT LANDSCAPE

They're too easy to count. "Y," of course, is preferable because it is not quite so boring (not one, two, three—but one, two—one). Balance does not enter into this decision since all of the pictures are fairly well balanced. To point up the undesirability of "E," the ground was made to sag in the middle. I cannot remember ever seeing a good picture in which the center of interest was placed in the middle of a sag!

In art school, as a boy of seventeen, I was often baffled when teachers would say, "That's bad. Look; one, two, three! Can't you unify your composition more?" I liked the "one, two, three," but I have learned (the hard way) that buyers of pictures don't. No one wants to feel impelled to count anything but money, and some lucky people who have enough don't even bother with that! So "E" and "Y" are ruled out.



S



E



Y

The Answers

Detailed information on each set of designs in Section One is given upside down. The little crossword puzzle shown below is a quick key to your score. Correct answers spell out Scotch Plains. Middle Valley is second best, and we will hear from Basking Ridge (a bad third, but only in this test).

1	S	C	O	T	C	H	P	L	A	I	N	S
2	M	I	D	D	L	E	V	A	L	L	E	Y
3	B	A	S	K	I	N	G	R	I	D	G	E

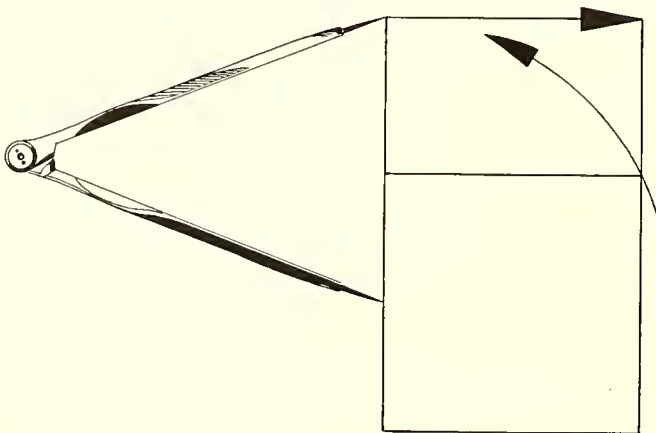
For scoring purposes use the first code town only. If you got three or less letters wrong, your score is good and your key letter is one. If you

missed 4 to 7 inclusive, you were only fair, and if you were wrong 8 to 12 times (inclusive) your basic taste is bad and your number is 3. Make a note of your number and go on to Section Two.

Approximately equal numbers of men and women were subjected to these tests in several groups which have been boiled down as follows: Artists, college graduates, non-college graduates.

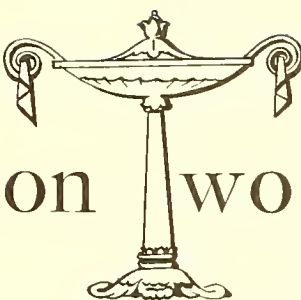

Using the designs favored by *all* groups as a criterion, the average number of mistakes for *all* groups was 4.69. Artists, naturally, scored highest, non-college graduates lowest. Women, in each category, scored somewhat lower than men. An exhaustive survey might alter these detailed findings. The number tested, however (309), is considered by statisticians to be adequate to establish an all-over trend. The author will welcome the results of amateur research.

MORE ABOUT THE FAVORITE GREEK RECTANGLE



If you want to amuse yourself drawing "perfect" shapes, here's the formula:

Draw a square. (See bottom of diagram.) Bisect one side with a compass. Then swing an arc through the upper right corner as far as a line extended upward from the left side of the square. From the intersection of arc and line project a line outward at right angles, then downward at right angles as shown.



Section two

Artistic success in any field consists of doing the things which are most liked by the public at large. *Creative ability* consists of taking the things the public at large likes and doing them a little bit differently and a little better—but only a little. *Creative genius* consists of doing them very differently, and keeping at it so persistently that the public comes to accept what you've done. Geniuses are appreciated by a very few people who have looked at all the art liked by the public at large. They have also looked at all the pictures which are just a little better than the public has ever seen. Now they are waiting—like jaded gourmets—for something a little better than those. The art produced by the wild-eyed pioneers filters down very slowly to people who are not yet jaded by a surfeit of art. (Down is not the word, because there is no reason why anyone should be self-conscious about simple tastes in art any more than an artist is ashamed because he has a simple taste in, say, mathematics. Let's say art spreads—out—from the centers where it is produced.)

As a corollary to the above it may be said that there are three degrees of appreciation. Some people haven't yet got enough of the commonplace. Some aren't yet bored with the unusual. A very few can take outrageously novel things in their stride.

Not all outrageously novel things are good

enough to stand the test of time. Some became the fashion because their creator achieved notoriety. The paintings of Van Gogh and Gauguin and Dali may be in this category. Some are just novelties which die when the jaded cognoscenti tire of them.

Some of the examples shown in this section are novelties. But each embodies the principles described in Section One to a more or less complex degree. And all of the examples, good or bad, were chosen by specialists in their own field or by groups of specialists.

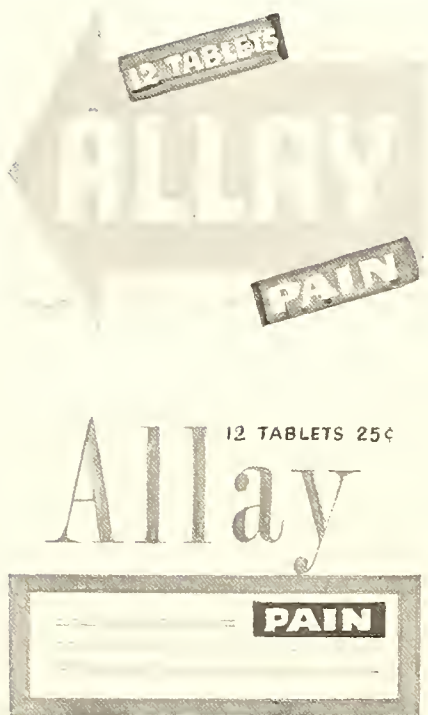
Are you sophisticated? Have you breadth? How is your taste in unlimited, specialized fields? Do you get about? Have you an opinion on how a building should look? Can you tell a rare dog from a mongrel? Or a good type face from "Hobo Oldstyle"? It's doubtful. You are now up against specialists. Of course a specialist is a person who could give you something much better than you can buy and for less money, if you wanted it, so he's fairly conditioned (like you) to producing salable mediocrity. Don't let this thought lull you into security. You are up against specialists who are asserting their own tastes, and to hell with yours. Are you ready? On the count of three draw lorgnette or monocle, turn the mouth down, raise the eyebrows, and begin. You, too, can be a snob.

FIRST WE'LL MAKE YOU AN ARTIST!

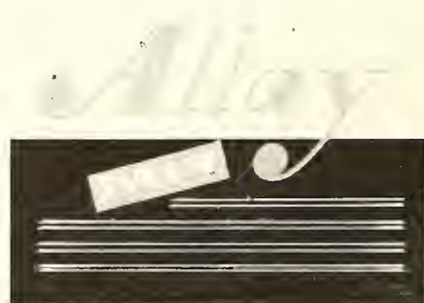
The efforts of two illustrators, a layout man, a designer, and an art director are lightly sprinkled over the next pages. Since no one but another artist can be fully aware of the fine nuances of a layout or an illustration, you'll be an artist if you score well in this department!

Here's the designer at work. His problem: to design a new box for a headache remedy. Twelve rough preliminary sketches like these were done. To test his judgment the designer showed them to about twenty-five other artists, and asked their opinions. The two which were most liked are shown here opposite the two which were least liked. You are not asked which one was *the* best liked but which *pair* you think is best.

The pair at the left received many more votes. Of those the lower one won first prize.



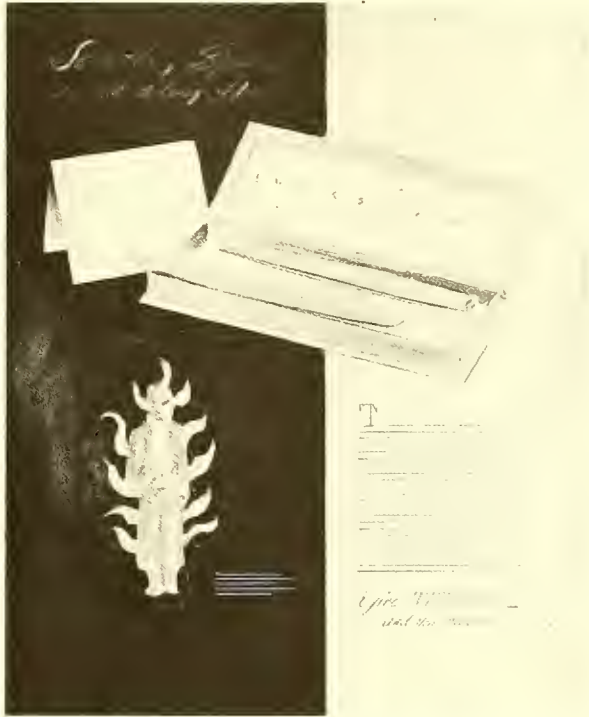
N



G

Below and to the right are three layouts.

A layout is a plan for an advertisement. It is created by an art director in collaboration with a copy writer who wants it done *her* way. This results in two layouts, one good. (Copy writers scored rather low in these tests.) Both layouts are subjected to criticism and advice by various callers at the art director's office, and modified to suit the more reasonable and intelligent suggestions. The best goes to the client and, it is fervently hoped, gets to run in a magazine so you will rush out and buy the product advertised! John Stochrer, high-priced art director, says *none* of these got out of the office but would like to know which one would have gone to the client if he had had his way.

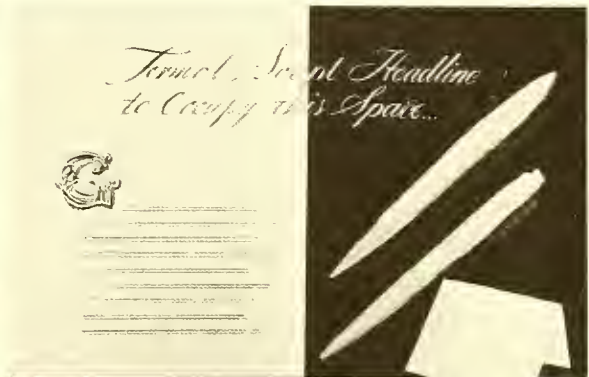


E

An adequate answer would require a conference, but all layout experts interviewed immediately selected "E."



A



C



X



W

George Stevens, whose work you have seen in magazines such as *Cosmopolitan*, engages in a practice common to illustrators these days. To save time for his models and himself he makes preliminary sketches, then poses his models before a camera in his studio. Watercolor notes and the photograph save hours of tedious posing. Here are two different shots of a couple on a picnic posed with such props as were handy. Which did George reject and which formed the framework of his illustration?

Several painters—not above petty jealousy—said both were lousy compositions, but all the artists preferred the one on the right. The girl is stiff in the left-hand photo. She's relaxed in the pose at the right, where (incidentally) the picnic kit is better displayed for reference.

Contrary to popular opinion, artists as a class are the most reliable and conscientious of people. These qualities lead to a degree of perfectionism seldom encountered elsewhere—even in businessmen. Here are parts of two paintings made originally for Pepperell Sheets. Carol Johnson, the artist, didn't like the way his picture came out the first time so he redid it. Everyone liked the second one much better. Reaction to it centered chiefly around the little girl, so we've cropped both pictures down to concentrate on her. Which one do you think was used?

The little girl with the braids won out just as surely as Margaret O'Brien succeeded Shirley Temple. She's more natural and charming. The other child looks like a model. She's stiff and "posey." Mother isn't quite so beautiful or smart either.



Y



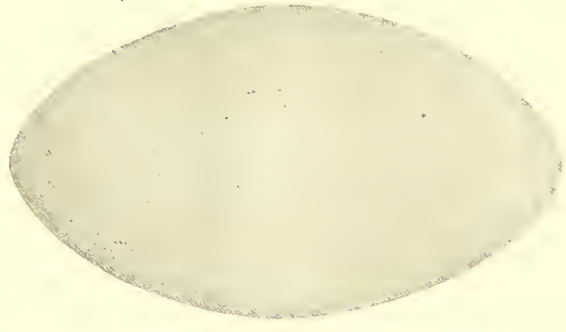
Z

These are layout men's devices. In use they bear captions, detailed information about products advertised, headlines, titles, et cetera. Henry Follmer, lately of the Armed Forces, and now happily designing again, has paired corny or old-fashioned devices with others which were up to date as of 10 A.M., August 15, 1946. The comparable devices read left to right. Pick the four good ones.

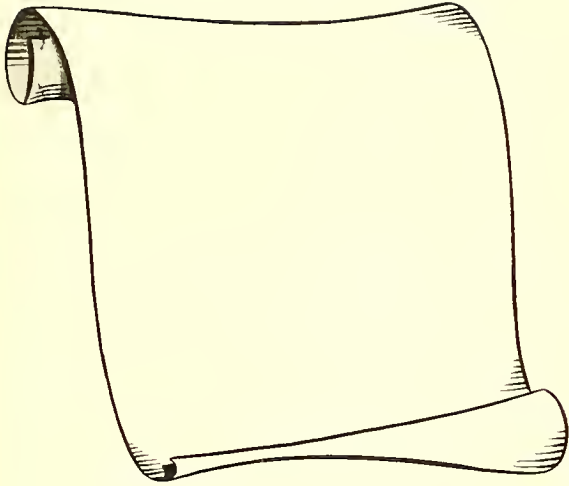
The top left is better. All the other good ones are on the right. The bad ones are bad simply because they are archaic. Archaic is a word which means "prepared last week" in the advertising and publishing business!



O



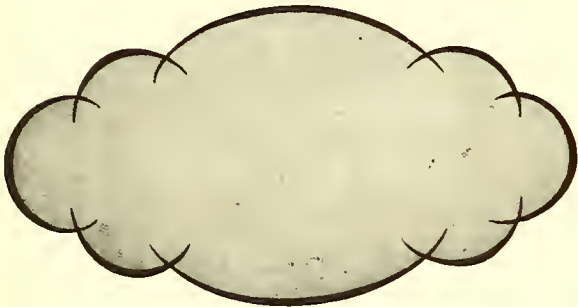
N



P



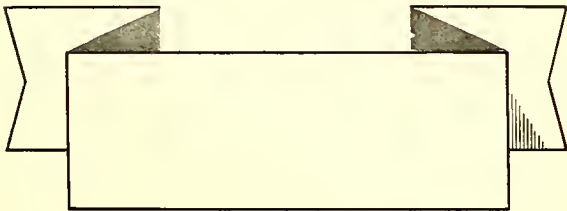
R



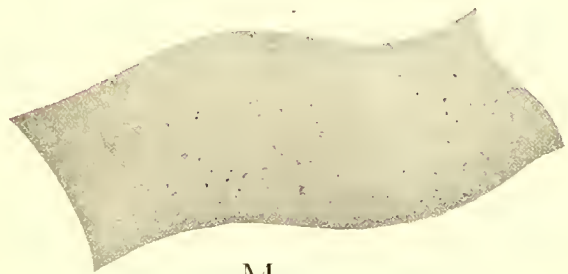
Q



K



S



M

NOW YOU'RE A BIG-TIME PHOTOGRAPHER

Edwina Seaver, who is a very good modern American ballet dancer, was photographed informally (but carefully posed just the same) at the Paul D'Ome Studio. (They are crack advertising photographers.) Two of the proofs are shown at the right. One is much better. Which? And why?—while we're at it!

If you suspected it is more "arty" not to show the face (as in the first shot, B) you're wrong. A face like that should always be shown. The right arm should be shown, too, and not obscured by whatever it is that obscures it in shot "B." And, finally, why should that nightgown or something not always be at the left? Why should it tangle with Miss Seaver's hair? The differences may seem negligible, but the right-hand shot is infinitely better.



B



A

The advertisement in which one of these nurses appeared was sponsored by Pepperell Manufacturing Company. It was a plea for army nurses and won an award as one of the hundred best war-effort advertisements of 1945. James Viles made the picture (of Jean Pearce, popular model). Jimmie and Jean were asked to produce a nurse with a "going-to-glory" expression. They did; but which one is it?

Everyone concerned (and that includes the Medical Corps) liked "R" best. "J" is a look to repel wolves! In "B" the lights got into Jean's blue eyes. "C" is pretty good, but "R" is on the nose!



J



B



C



R

HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT SHIP MODELS?

Enthusiasts feel very strongly about them! Two of these would make a good ship-model man reach for the nearest belaying pin ($\frac{1}{16}$ inch to a foot, of course). Which do you want for your mantel?

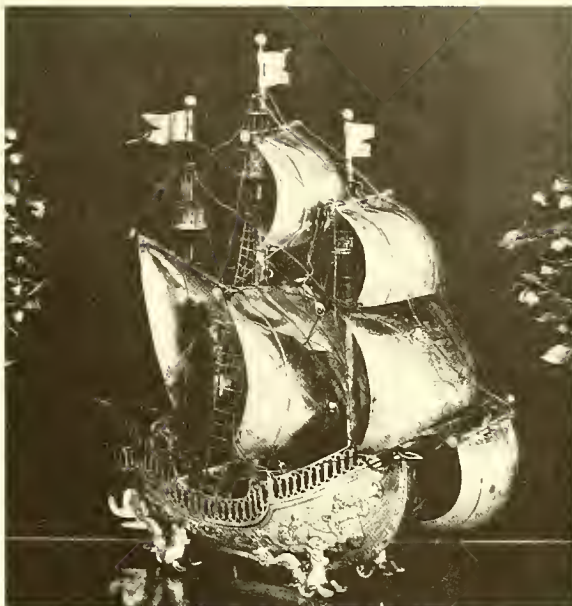


K

Unless a model of a clipper is gigantic—twenty feet long or so—sails are inexcusable. The finest silk, if “blown up” to actual size, would result in sails at least four inches thick! And those phoney waves—and cotton spray—very bad!

Galleons are as old-hat as a pirate's costume at a masked ball. And a metal job like this—even an obviously expensive one in silver—calls the horrible chromium imitations that caused averted eyes as early as 1934!

Here's the one you undoubtedly picked. It was made by one of the best miniature shipwrights in the country—an amateur—name of Byron Musser. It has doweled planks, yet, and is accurate to an incredible degree. The Museum of Science and Industry borrowed one of Mr. Musser's models for an indefinite period. This is the United States sloop of war Wasp (1807).



M



B

DOGS

As a snap answer to a sudden question you'd hardly say a dog was the result of a craftsman's efforts unless "craftsman" were capitalized!

But each of these dogs owes its characteristics to generations of breeders and might in a sense be called the creation of man. Each except one, that is, and even that one was a deliberate experiment (aided, of course, by two dogs).

Which one of these diverse specimens is not a pure-bred dog? Consider carefully. Your friendship with a dog fancier could terminate suddenly if you didn't recognize and appreciate his favorite breed!

The enterprising breeder of L, which is half cocker spaniel and half Scottish terrier, wins our congratulations, a box of Milky Ways, and the following suggestion for a name: "Spanotch Terriel." If the surly, stupid Scotty inherits some of the fawning and boring cocker's brains and the other qualities blend nicely, the new breed should become very popular. He looks more like a dog than some of the others, which are J, Brussels griffon; B, African barkless, or Basenji; D, Briard; F, Chihuahua; and F, Welsh Corgi. You are assured that all are pure-bred dogs in good standing at the American Kennel Club, all are excellent specimens. Fix from: (J, D) Mr. Warren W. McFadden; (B), Mr. Harry Miller of Gaines (Dog Food) Research Center; (F, F) Fred Lewis. The Spanotch Terriel came from Percy T. Jones and was bred, half laughingly, by F. Gordon Brown of Glen Cove, Long Island, whose normal preoccupation is Golden retrievers (two champions; more on the way).



J



B



L



D



P



F

PIPES

One of these pipes is a rare, much-sought-after type which would cost at least ten times as much as the other. Either you know why at a glance, or you don't. If they look equally desirable (or undesirable) to you, just make a guess and go on. Trying to reason out the answer won't help you.



G



E

The lower one is a perfect example of rare straight-grained bruyere root. Quite incidentally, it is made of an Algerian burl although you could not be expected to know it from a photo. The grain of the upper pipe is quite nondescript.

Grain, density of wood, and freedom from flaws are the all-important things in briar pipes. Most popular grain used to be the bird's-eye sort; today straight grains fetch the premium prices. The authority? The Wilke sisters—they own and run the smartest pipe shop on Madison Avenue, New York.



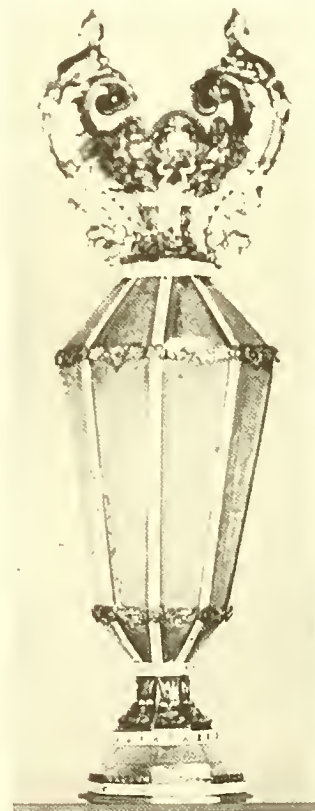
H



E

OLD THINGS AREN'T ALWAYS GOOD

All of these are old—and collectors' items. One was made about a hundred and seventy years ago—two go back about three hundred. Without regard for any incongruity which might result from using them in your home, which do you hate least fervently?



F

Well, the Sévres vase (that's "H") is pretty attractive, if you keep an open mind about things. It's in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. The other two items are Venetian and prove that the Doge's Palace and the Bridge of Sighs had no monopoly on horrors. The imitation horn of decorated china which has been made into a parrot with an animal's head on its tail is the most completely horrible object which I can remember seeing. The octagonal rock crystal and silver gilt vase is no dream either.

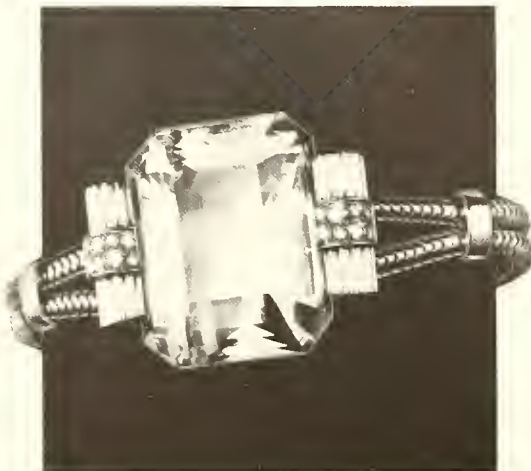


D

BAD THINGS AREN'T ALWAYS CHEAP

With the money these bracelets cost (and fairly modest requirements) you could retire. But one is a stinker just the same, and another is not too good. Which ones would you not wear to a dogfight? Which is in the best taste?

"D" cost considerably more than \$20,000, but we have the word of a jewelry stylist that it couldn't be worse. It's the sort of thing that a man who got rich overnight on a hot-dog concession buys for mama, who wears it shopping for groceries. No, the beautiful model did not go with it!
 "C" is pretty bad, too, and less expensive than either "D" or "E." The latter is very correct and very, very expensive. It came from Black, Starr & Gorham.



C

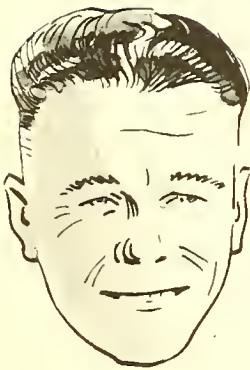


E

WHICH HAIRCUT?

Regardless of how you (or your loved one, if you're a gal) part or don't part your hair, there's a preferred arrangement. It was determined by checking the photo registers of male models issued by such agencies as Conover, Huben, et cetera. Which plan do you think the majority of New York's best-groomed men favor?

Y



A



Z



B



If you picked "A" or "Z," you are entitled to a win because 72 per cent use a side part. "A" is much more favored than "Z." Since most men are right-handed, a right side part would seem logical. But if you check your friends, you will probably find that 60 per cent of all men part their hair on their left. Can you imagine why? Their mothers were mostly right-handed! Catch on? The part was established when Mama faced her little boy and dropped the comb on his left, her right. Left-hand parters had left-handed mothers. Or a strong sense of logic and an adventurous nature! No parts are favored by the very young and a few others totaling 20 per cent. Right-hand men number about 17 per cent and center-parters (mostly over 50) constitute a meager 3 per cent of the total. "Y" is the worst style here. The sides of the head are skinned, motorman style.

Q

Early in the Eighteenth Century
a London apprentice was working at
his trade as an engraver. As he grew
to manhood he confined himself al-
most entirely to the cutting of letters
and ornaments for bookbinders.

D

Early in the Eighteenth Century
a London apprentice was working at
his trade as an engraver. As he grew
to manhood he confined himself al-
most entirely to the cutting of letters
and ornaments for bookbinders.

W

From the days of the first grandfather,
everybody has remembered a golden
age behind him!

(James Russell Lowell)

a golden age

X

From the days of the first grandfather
everybody has remembered a golden
age behind him!

(James Russell Lowell)

LETTERS ARE BEAUTIFUL

Of course designers of letters sometimes knowingly sacrifice some beauty to achieve great legibility, or compactness, or some other practical aim. In each of the tests on the opposite page one example is more practical, the other more beautiful. Composition Service, Inc., specialists in ad setting; Willie Sekuler, type expert; and Jerry Mullen, calligrapher and type designer, hatched these plots against you. (The words "golden" in the lower paragraphs were set in a large size of the body type to make your decision easier.)

"D" was hand-lettered by Mr. Mullen. "Q" is type, set to approximate "D." Type can never compete on equal terms with the best lettering since each individual character in a line of lettering can be modified ever so slightly to harmonize with its neighbor. Half shut your eyes and look at the paragraphs again. Notice the spottiness of "Q"—the smooth, even "color" of "D." "W" and "X" at the bottom of the page are both "Caslon" type cut to perform slightly different functions. "W" is more beautiful.

TRANSPARENT

A

While we're on the subject of type, you might take a gander at these two words. You like ————?

TRANSPARENT

V

The upper one—it is to be hoped! It's legitimate. If a type is to be condensed, then it should be condensed—and neatly condensed. No shilly-shallying!

This, as it tells you, is lettering—in the style known to calligraphers as "informal brush lettering." I did the bad one; Frank Conley, calligrapher, did the other. Since I'm not around you may be free with your opinion!

Frank's is the beautiful "dry" one ("S")—the other is deliberately corny; well, maybe not so deliberately!

Lettering!

U

Lettering!

S

T



H



EVER WIN A PRIZE AT A FLOWER SHOW?

Alice H. Schade, wife of Commodore Schade, U.S.N., has. Many times. She's lectured on flower arranging, too, and taught the art. Here she has used the same flowers two ways to demonstrate good and bad practice in displaying gladioli. Which way do you like them?

(The photos are by Caldwell Huske.)
plans like this are good and easily achieved." rangement into a graceful shape. Triangular trast," Mrs. Schade says. "And build your ar- tinct. "Use more interesting greens as con- part of slum weddings; they are otherwise ex- But that's not all. Asparagus ferns may be a in contrast to the lovely decorative dish in "H."

"T" couldn't be worse. It is unnatural. Flow- ers don't grow in an arc, and in their natural state are not seen as blobs of color at the ends of spindly, drooping stems. Massed arrange- ments such as "H" are more natural and make a more effective splash of color. "T" is un- fashionable too. It uses one of the most hor- rible vases Washington junk shops had to offer



S



I

ASH TRAYS

Mustn't tell you anything about these in advance. Just pick one. The better one.

which tries to be up to date by eliminating all quaint or gruesome.

Both might be pretty horrid to a person who couldn't stand Victorian or Baroque things, but the black one is quaint old cast iron. The white one is a cheap, vulgar pottery imitation

DISPLAYS

New York is the most important center of a little-known industry, and Al Bliss might be called its dean. He makes "prefabricated" displays for important stores all over the country. The next nine pictures, in groups of three, are Bliss-designed and -manufactured windows. Al refuses to be quoted on which he thinks is better but other experts are not so reticent. There's a window which is fair, good, or wonderful in each group. Pick the one in the best taste.

A lighting fixture is an important adjunct to each of these windows. None is bad but one is outstandingly good.

This window isn't novel but it is exquisite taste. No one would pass it without a glance, despite its quiet, dignified appearance.



The chandelier is interesting but overwhelming out of scale. You'd have to be a pretty determined person to wrench your eyes away from it and look at the shoes.



R

Apart from the fact that giant candles can't compete with chandeliers for beauty, the introduction of the dummy between the candles is pretty silly. The window is cluttered too. It's easily the least attractive.



Q

This is too easy but it's a swell example of the way an originally wonderful thing can deteriorate with repetition.

The original Lord & Taylor bell window ("G") was the talk of New York the year it first appeared. Its simple yet grand conception was breath-taking. You can't blame the little out-of-town stores for demanding that Bliss make bells for them. Nor can you blame them for debasing the conception to suit the taste of their less sophisticated customers. But six bell ringers are not six times as good as one. The effect of all those rumps bobbing up at you must have been striking!



G

O



P



Here are three interior display gadgets intended to draw attention to departments specializing in southern-resort wear.



M



T



N

No doubt about which one would draw the most attention, but there might be some question as to whether a sun shop or a fish market were featured. The lobster is pretty bad and its connotations are not too pleasant either! Monkeys and coconuts are corny. The nice one with the sun was originally designed by Hub Lenz for Macy's.

CERAMICS.



O



L

Will you have the zebra or the giraffes?

The zebra is a signed piece by the excellent sculptor Strick. The giraffes come under the heading of things to be put away and collected seventy-five years from now as "awfully quaint examples of naïve 1940 lamp bases."

N



K



ONE OF THESE PAINTINGS, IS VALUABLE

If you want to cheat, you may look up *Time* for March 12, 1945, where you will find one of the opposite paintings reproduced, along with about seven inches of *Time*-style narrative in eight point about its creator. No cluck, he! But which, he did?

The upper painting was made by Julian Levi who is in this book because he is a friend of the author and one of the ten best painters in America as of now. (I could narrow that down, but discretion requires that a broad view be taken.) "Red Dory," for that is its name, belongs to Mrs. Arthur Loew, Downton Gallery, lent the photo. Thank you, Mrs. Loew, Mr. Downton. Thanks, too, to a nameless secondhand shop on Seventy-second Street for the inexpensive (let us say) spring scene shown below.



J



R

ONE OF THESE PLANT ARRANGEMENTS IS FASHIONABLE

One of these plant arrangements is a discouraging thing to have to sell, say the owners of the East Village Flower Shop (1244 Third Avenue). But what would you do if you had to do business in a neighborhood on its way up but still half tenements? You'd carry both. Which one would you *like* to sell?

You'd like to sell "R" because it would fetch more money and a more desirable type of customer. "J" is for the tenement dwellers, who love it! They leave the little celluloid lion from Japan in place too! They really do!

GOT A BROWNIE?

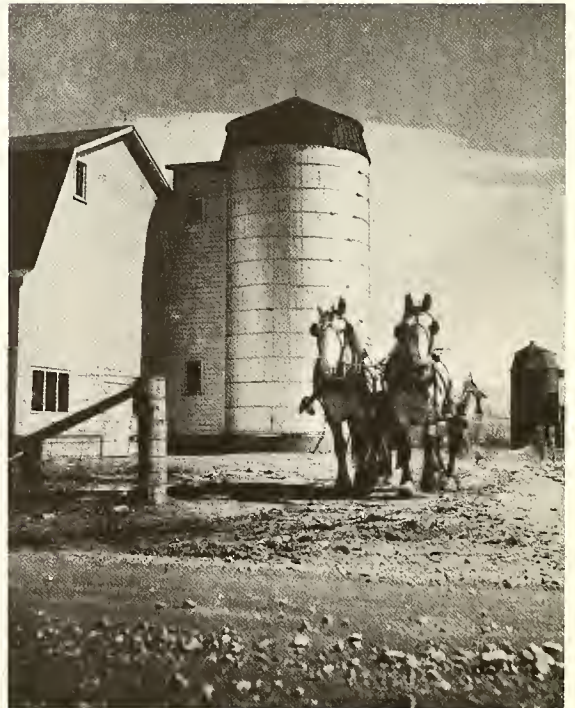
Tony Kamp is an art director who has been a professional photographer. He made these prints and cropped them three ways, one of which is correct. Your choice?



O



H



I

It is hoped that you selected "O," the unanimous choice of every artist who looked at these prints. In "H" the center of interest is too far to the left. In "I" there is too much irrelevant material. That mysterious wheel, for example, is distracting and inexplicable and adds nothing to the story.

BUILDING ENTRANCES

If you had to go to work every day (God forbid), which entrance would depress you most?



Scoville Manufacturing Company thought the answer would be "C" because they commissioned J. Gordon Carr, architect, to re-design it. Happy office workers now enter at "C."

WHICH FIREPLACE?

R. C. Budlong of Chatham, New Jersey, bought an old house and modernized it. Or bought a recent house and improved it—I'm not saying which. With which fireplace do you think the Budlongs would end up—given the fact that the Budlongs had good taste?

Too easy—channeled red brick and stained
chestnut trim are obsolete. You picked "K," of
course!



F





E



A

WHICH HOME?

These homes are not for sale or rent. If they were (and at the same price for each one), which would you choose? *American Home* (if you subscribe) should have told you.



D

Left Pair

Mrs. Warren Teton of Mercer Island, state of Washington, was not out of her mind when she called in an architect. The clever renovation is "A."

Right Pair

As you may have suspected, this is a renovation job too. *American Home* feels that Mrs. Louise C. Jordy (Madison, New Jersey) started with less of a handicap than Mrs. Teton because the house with the simple porch is not too unattractive. The resale value of "W" is very much greater, just the same! Simple, easily achieved, and much prettier.



W

GREETING CARDS

Frank Conley produced two pairs of commercial cards in the hope, probably vain, that people might be shamed into avoiding the worst ones.

Do you like the holly—or the star?


On the "holly" card, the top line is pretty good but the six succeeding words are lettered in a type style originally designed for *The New Yorker* back in the twenties and now, needless to say, hopelessly out of date. (Good literary styles last a long while. A type design dies rapidly.) The flourishes are not good either. The example with the star is open to the charge of being a little too newfangled but it certainly is preferable to "C."

Which of these?

If you missed this one you win a pewter statue of Venus with a Mickey Mouse clock set into her stomach. "B" is pure 1912 movie titling and couldn't be much worse unless it were also comic. "Y" is excellent.

With all good wishes
 FOR
 CHRISTMAS
 AND THE
 NEW YEAR

C


With all good wishes
 for Christmas
 and the New Year

A

Y

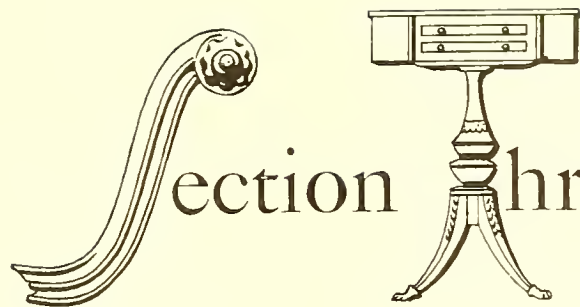
To wish you the
 JOYS OF THE SEASON
and happiness
all through the
 NEW YEAR

B

To wish you the
 JOYS OF THE SEASON
and happiness
all through the
 NEW YEAR

The Answers

The letters on the correct objects are planned to spell out this easily remembered code: New York, Marblehead, Washington, Rockaway. A score of "good" requires that you miss no more than eight tests. Nine to sixteen misses (inclusive) marks you as fair. Over 16 and up to 32 misses brands you as having a very low degree of sophistication. Mark yourself 1 for good, 2 for fair, and 3 for bad. Place the number you acquire *after* the number you achieved in the first section.



Section Three

There came, some thousands of years ago, a time when man had developed houses and furnished them with things to sit on and up to, and things to drink or eat from. Later, there came a time when there was leisure in which to make things just to look at, and lighting fixtures of a crude sort to permit him to see all these things clearly even when night had fallen. Leisure and lights. These two were the things that started the confusion. After lights were invented, a man didn't just come home and sit in a chair. He went visiting the neighbors. On the way home he listened to an early Coptic version of "Darling, when are we going to get some decent furniture?" Right then and there the ram's head finial (or its earlier unknown precursor) was born.

In those days there was just one type of furniture, and the variations ran from simple palm wood with rams' heads to teak or ebony with rams' heads. That was before they opened up Syria and the Syrian mode became (overnight, so to speak, or at least in a matter of only five hundred years) the only thing! A thousand years later there was a passing whimsey for the Babylonian mode. It lasted only a few hundred years; a thing of the moment.

This sort of shopping about amused the householders in several hundred isolated countries and provinces for something like eight thousand years.

Came a time when caravans began to bring

back furnishings in several different styles. The problem became more complicated. "Shall we do the east wing in Bactrian or Ethiopian?"

Skipping lightly over the intervening years, we come to a time when many new countries and periods of time are represented in the furniture bazaar. Skirting the camel court and the sesame-seed sellers, we round the corner to browse amid designs dating from 8000 B.C. to A.D. 1946—and coming from two hundred and eighty-four countries (or more, who knows?). And changing. Not from century to century, but from House and Garden to House and Garden!

If we except China, America is bigger than the sum total of all the countries from which most of our furniture styles are derived. That ought to make it big enough to contain all of them. And, unfortunately, for an analyst of taste, it does! In Minnesota former Swedes perpetuate the tradition of hand-painted and hand-carved peasant furniture. In the Southwest, the first settlers are represented by Spanish walnut and oak. New England's hey-day is remembered by adherence to the styles brought home by international clipper merchants. The Midwest fosters Victorian antiques; the South displays the best of the American Federal. And everywhere traditions brought from a thousand far-off cultural centers modify the prevailing taste of the moment.

To gain some idea of the complexity of

American taste, consider as an analogy one minor detail of the American man's costume. We point to hatbands. A map might be drawn clearly defining the areas where hatbands are 1½ inches high and others where they are less than ½ inch high. Within each area you would find pockets or isolated sections where the wrong hatband is permissible. But you would seldom find a low hatband associating with a high hatband—because their tastes are so different as to preclude normal social intercourse. This is ridiculous but true. In most of the low (but none of the high) hatband areas, the inhabitants have the good sense to realize that the United States has a tropical climate in the summer. Shirt sleeves are permissible. If the low hatband and the shirt-sleeve areas did not by any means coincide but required different maps to chart each one, you would have a situation comparable to that which confuses the furniture-taste picture. Except that in furniture you would be dealing with hundreds of styles and still more hundreds of individual items. A little multiplication would demonstrate that there must be thousands of areas with infinite degrees of good and bad taste in each one.

Let's take one item: floor coverings, to illustrate the point. It's easy to divide the population into two parts by mentioning figured and plain carpet. But this is not a geographical distinction; it's economic. The lower brackets like designs. Except (and here comes the first complication) for Oriental rug fanciers. They're usually upper bracket! And they may be placed geographically (in big cities everywhere and in cities and towns in the East). And, of course, the confusion here is compounded by the fact that cheap Chinese and imitation Orientals are favored here and there by low brackets. To all of this must be added the fact that there are smaller but definitely established groups who buy scatter rugs—Oriental, hooked, figured, plain, et cetera.

The carpet is down. Now put the different kinds of furniture which might be purchased on each carpet and you will have a very large number of racial, economic, and geographic blocs with only a few things in common: they

all bought war bonds; they all like babies, dogs, the movies; they are all, God bless them, Americans.

By eliminating many unimportant styles—and by making one style stand for several closely related ones—it is possible to give you a test which will determine your essential furniture preference.

The following pages show furniture typical of the most important taste groups.

Each spread in this section shows twelve different styles of one living-room item. For example, the first spread offers twelve different kinds of side chairs.

Pick one chair from this spread. Then turn to the upholstered-chair spread and pick one chair to go in the same room with the side chair. Although consistency is not always important in decorating, you are asked to make your selections as consistently as possible throughout the section.

The analyses in the rear of the book attempt to sketch the kind of room which would result if you, with your degree of taste (numbers 11 to 33), were to assemble it. The test may be taken on a basis of what sort of furniture you have now or what sort you would like to have. If none of the styles suit you exactly, choose the one nearest to your taste.

Please bear in mind that we are trying to find out how you feel about the way a living room should look. This is not a handbook on furniture design. Great care was taken to show good examples of each style, but experts will note sins against history and consistency.

Items widely separated by years but usually associated because they came from the same country, or are made of the same wood, or just look the same, may be placed for our purpose in one category.

Certain styles which were originally antique are now principally represented in the market by simplified or debased or just lousy copies. In such cases the latter may be used as illustrations—or occasionally both originals and copies may be used (in one category, or as separate categories).

If you are ready we will step into the elevator and go up to the top floor.

Side Chairs

(R) This may not be your idea of an Oriental chair but that's because you were brought up on Occidental versions of Oriental chairs. This is genuine—and straight from the Los Angeles County Museum. The struts under the seat are most characteristic. It was made in the seventeenth century, presumably of rosewood, and antedates modern design by about three hundred years.

(S) Side chairs such as these are very popular now as decorative adjuncts to foyers. In real use they are the most impractical of antiques, being unbelievably brittle and always wobbly. They were used in a day when no one was expected to put the back of a chair to any use. Popular just before and after the Civil War, this kind of Victorian apes earlier French styles.

(A) Wallace Nutting, the greatest authority on Windsor furniture, would have to accord this the palm. It's just about the best of its type. Consider the beautifully shaped seat and generous vases on the legs. Windsor was the functional chairs of their day, combining maximum durability and portability with minimum weight and expense. (About 1725-50.) Reproduced by courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City.

(P) Olive-green lacquered chair of the period Louis XVI. Produced in a day when the decline of the great French tradition of magnificence had set in, but still more exacting as to workmanship than most American furniture, antique or modern. Probably owned by someone who bought antiques when the best was still on the market, but a little old hat today, nonetheless!

(E) This is today's mission chair. It purports to be early American, actually resembles chairs used in English pubs and is American only in that it uses native maple (or birch, in cheaper grades). The mortise and tenon feature in the front stretcher is homey as hell but was never used in an early American piece. It's cozy-looking, cheap, and a bit skimpy.

(D) Typical Empire chair photographed from a rather unfortunate angle. The classic Egyptian influence is evident in the animalism: swans in the back, antelope's feet on the front legs. Probably no other style was so widely copied throughout the world. The seat is covered with typical Empire brocade. (The American Art Association.)

(W) Perfunctory adaptation of Empire motifs. Very popular in low-priced traditional lines. Best seller in most department stores where it is usually called "Duncan Phyfe," because Duncan is dead and can't sue. Usually finished to look like mahogany but rarely anything more than dyed gunwood.

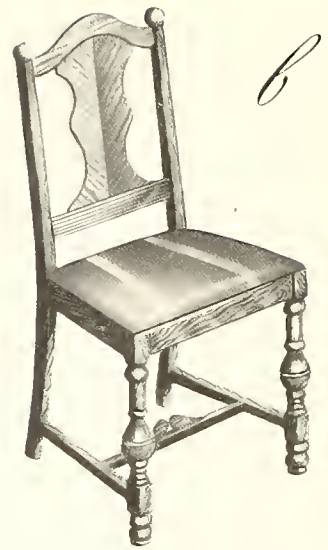
(C) This sort of thing is being cleared out at bargain prices these days to monomaniacs and museums. Made in the early 1600s in Italy and pretty fagged after three hundred years of being sat on, it will last a few more years as a catchall in someone's hall (not mine). It is interesting and attractive but not fashionable.

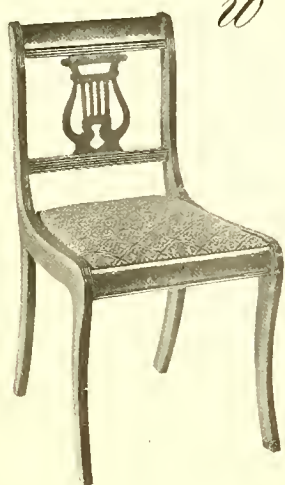
(O) Modern chair made by Conant Ball Company. An excellent example of the sort of furniture which is planned to fulfill a mission rather than to be pretty. The mission is to be sat on—and it accomplishes it. It also manages to be extremely graceful. It won't squeak or wobble when you use it; it's almost as comfortable as an armchair, but it calls for a lot of reupholstering when worn.

(G) The Metropolitan Museum of Art is responsible for this excellent photograph of a chair in the Chippendale style. Nine out of ten readers will have recognized this for a masterpiece even if they didn't choose it for their living room, because it is the most widely publicized kind of chair in existence. Chippendale "Ribonback," 1750-85.

(L) Included in the Baroque category because many such interiors utilize refurbished antiques. This is a Victorian chair typically redone in white paint and manve satin upholstery. Lots of tricked-up semi-antiques like this are popular today because their desirable carving would be very costly to reproduce in anything else but flimsy plaster.

(B) This horror is still being sold to otherwise sane and sober Americans. Misbegotten out of a state of mind called Jacobean a good twenty-five years ago and misused by numbers of shameless designers ever since, it still graces the pages of mail-order catalogues. This is Borax at its worst, conceived by the warped minds who also contrive the nation's juke boxes.





Chairs

(A) You must have known it was Empire. It was sold some years ago by the American Art Association to an unknown but lucky purchaser. Most of the characteristics of the period are present: the medallion-shaped designs in seat and back, the beautiful veneering, the opulent gilt appliqué. A room full of this is somewhat overwhelming but it's lovely as relief to Functional.

(D) Like the Functional chair of the preceding pages, this design is in the most modern style. This might be expected when a good manufacturer such as Conant Ball teams up with a practical store like Macy's. Its "cantilever" construction in blond modern wood is most characteristic of 1946. Advantages: lightness, strength, grace. No fabric on the arms to soil quickly.

(L) Throughout the book items made before 1650 are referred to as Feudal regardless of whether they are Renaissance, Gothic, or just awful old. Parts of this chair, notably the tapestry, are sixteenth century; the whole thing is forbidding (to me). The style is James II. Are you still with me? Before the advent of "airport modern" this could have been referred to as "Hotel Lobby" furniture. Now it's "old movie palace."

(S) This is typical Louis XVI: expensive, dignified, even regal, and a product of a grand era of furniture making. It is lacquered white and upholstered in cream brocade with floral decorations. In case you want to know, those are "stop-flute" legs, and "spade" feet. The oval back is molded. Such chairs are almost never copied today.

(R) A real "patrician" is this proud chair, with its brass nails and red damask covering. This is the best accepted period piece of them all. The claw-and-ball foot was used by Chippendale, who may have produced the design from which the chair was adapted. Note the superior curve of the curve leading from the front of the arm down toward the seat. (C. 1725-50.)

(C, R) This chair has just about as proud a pedigree as "R" but fits better into a Mellow room. The Toile de Jouy print is typical of those made for the American trade. The piece was made some time late in the eighteenth century because the print shows "the apotheosis of Benjamin Franklin!" Owned by the Metropolitan Museum of Art. It has given rise to many copies, some almost indistinguishable from the original.

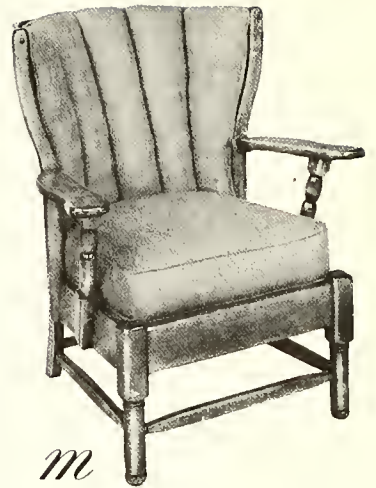
(H) Here is the contemporary (or "store") version of the wing chair. It has Queen Anne or "bun" feet in defiance of the fact that the Queen Anne style is otherwise seldom available except as antiques. This is probably because well-carved legs (see "R") or square legs with stretchers (see "C") are more expensive to produce. It is comfortable and commonplace.

(U) If a chair can have personality this one is a good-humored, jovial, and happy aristocrat. It's Baroque, of course, but will fit into a Functional room nicely or even join hands with Victorian things provided the latter aren't chairs. It is extremely of the moment, being produced in limited quantities for a Madison Avenue shop which specializes in one of a kind Baroque and (some) Functional items; Carole Stuppell.

(T) Of all the Victorian pieces this kind of chair seems to me to have the most charm and grace. Like the preceding example of the same style, it closely resembles French Monarchial. In this case the inspiration was a Louis XV *berçère*. It's much more comfortable than you might think and not so flimsy as similar side chairs.

(E) This is pure Chinese, of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644). Dating it exactly would be difficult because the Chinese did not soon cast a good thing aside once they had achieved it. Occidental collectors call this a "hoop-back." It is made of rosewood. The Chinese influence is enjoying a renaissance right now, so it is quite possible that chairs resembling this will be seen in the market.

(O) Not traditional, not functional, and undecorating of a bossy handle like contemporary, this piece might yet be called modern, especially if an "e" were added. The trade coined another word for it: Borax. Apart from antiques, few furniture styles stand out today; aesthetically this is at the bottom of the list. (M) This comes under the Homely heading. It is difficult to deal unkindly with such an honest and forthright piece of merchandise. A person operating on a small budget and with limited time to seek out cheap antiques can't do better than to buy maple (or maple-finished birch). There's no vulgar ostentation about it and it wears well. But it's dull.



o



e



t



h



c r

r



l



d

a



Sofas

(E) This contemporary sofa looks classic, is nondescript. Actually it derives from several antique types and is at home in almost any room. That's a particularly good quality in sofas because they involve quite an outlay and may be called upon to survive several decorating upsets!

(U) Carolan carved walnut settee in seventeenth-century medleypoint. It looks like Loew's Seventy-second Street to me!

(N) The entire Oriental section in the back of the book was written and all of the Oriental pictures collected before this piece and the lamp were on the market. Its appearance vindicates a very bearish feeling about the future of Chinese objects. From Carole Stuppell.

(Y) More Louis XVI, used when practical throughout to typify the Monarchial French feeling although Louis XV was even more lush. This one is handsomely carved and gilded. The tapestry is Beauvais. The date is about 1770; the maker probably Georges Jacob.

(T) If you like Mellow things, you'll put up with the hard seat for the sake of its rarity and homely beauty, but you'll probably stick it in the hall and throw skates on it just the same. Windsor settees are rare; this one is of peculiar interest because of its beautifully carved arms and the lack of rake in its two center pairs of legs, 18th century.

(R) Little daisy, model M-134458. Available in three styles of upholstery, all garish. No front parlor should be without one! Send no money! Just rip off the dust covers of two hundred and thirty copies of this book!

(D) It's not a planet! It's Super Divani! Covered in something other than that tiresome old twill or burlap the modern-design boys always use, it would be a wonder. It's something of a wonder anyway, and a damnable more practical than anything else shown here, except "N," which also divides, and is lots prettier.

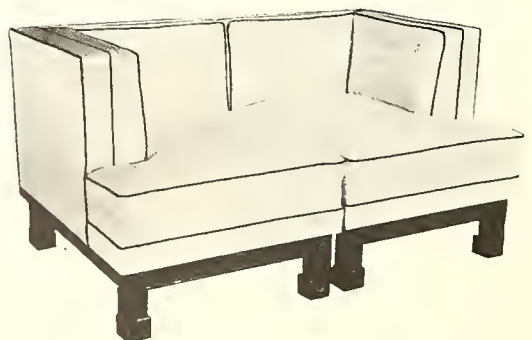
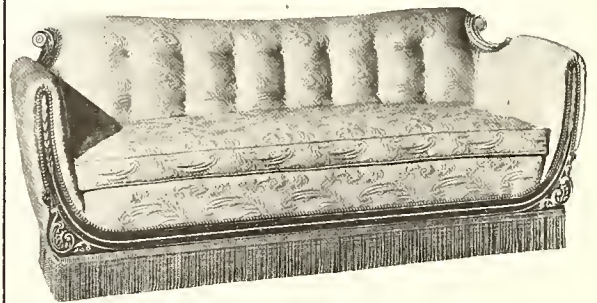
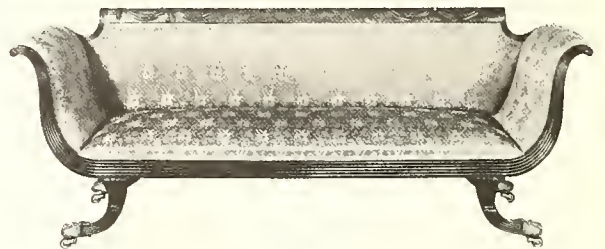
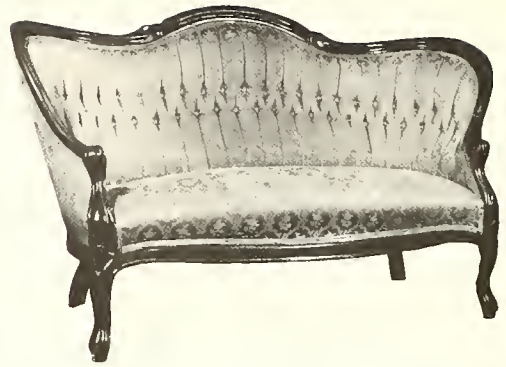
(P) Old rough-hewn rug again. These Honey items get out of hand occasionally and break out in a rash of applied galleons and other supposedly quaint symbols. They are otherwise very well, as has been said before.

(M) This is the real McCoy, a genuine honest-to-goodness Duncan Phyfe piece. It was made in about 1805 and is as lovely a thing as you're liable to find in a day's march up Madison Avenue and down Lexington. The original French Empire inspiration for this piece was subjected to a purifying process by being filtered through British then American drafting paper.

(S, D) This will do to represent the Baroque taste until we get one as fancy as the beds which are already selling very well. It is admittedly innocent of swoops and swirls but it does curve in conformity with the usual Baroque tendency. It ought to make its owner feel at home, too, because it could have been lifted out of a smart night club.

(A) There was a claw-and-ball job which might have gone here but this was so beautiful it had to be used. Adding it to your living room should automatically stamp you as a person of breeding even if you keep a slot machine in the corner and a coin box in the hall. The upholstery is brocade. American Chipendale (c. 1745-95).

(O) Just as graceful as the Victorian chairs of the last two spreads, this sofa lacks the comfort of the upholstered chair, but suffers from the fragility of the side chair. This is unfortunate because it's a nice item and not hard to come by if you have about \$200 lying around loose. This one was acquired from a junk shop in 1933 for \$15. Any bids?



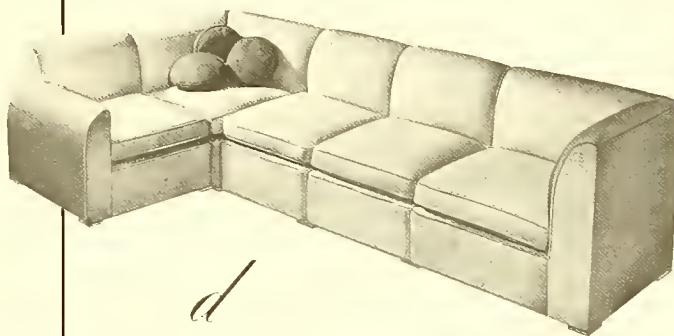
a



sd

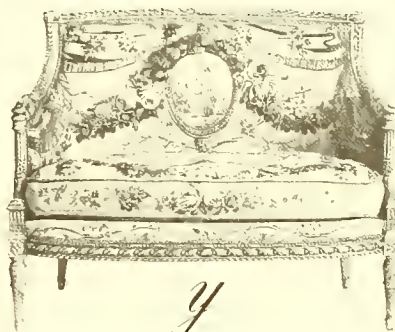


p



d

t



y



u

e



Small Tables

(T) Pure Chinese but not so old or so good as the first two items in the category. This kind of table was made in large quantities for export to America between fifty and seventy-five years ago. On arrival it usually had a large, ugly fern jardiniere clapped onto it right off and was placed, with its mate, on either side of the bay window. A similarly carved screen usually added a gloomy note to the scene.

(S, N) A splendid example of eighteenth-century pie-crust table. Claw-and-ball feet, scalloped edges on the tilting top, and the use of fine solid mahogany render identification easy. Positive identification of the owner of such a piece is just as easy; if male, he owns a morning coat and striped trousers. Females wear ermine and brocade capes to the opera.

(O) The modest, sturdy counterpart of "S." Made, probably, by an itinerant cabinetmaker, of local wood (cherry), and originally painted with red ochre fixed in skimmed milk. This stand has great charm. The top is warped by age but it's as strong as the day it was made.

(M) Available information on this solemn little table is as follows: (1) English, (2) oak, (3) seventeenth century. The designs carved on the sides are found on Jacobean and Elizabethan furniture of other types. The style was widely imitated about twenty-five years ago when it was being collected.

(R) Grandma's marble-topped fern or lamp stand. Yesterday regarded with horror, today being collected as quaint. Will it be tomorrow's ideal standard of beauty? Probably not, because like most of today's Borax, it was a cheap, mass-produced thing. In this it differs sharply from "O" which might be called the Borax of its day, but which nonetheless was handmade lovingly by craftsmen.

(A) Even the furniture makers who produce horrors like this wish that the public would buy something else. They are intelligent men in a successful and honored trade. But people want vulgar, snide things and there's money to be made in providing them. Thank goodness magazines are pointing the way to an America in which standards of beauty will equal efficiency in living.

(C) Preceding French Monarchial items have been Louis XVI, a style in which straight lines regained ascendancy over curves. This is Louis XV and was made in 1760 at the height of the Rococo period. At this time every article known to the furniture-manufacturing world had been developed and was being exploited. Tulip and other woods with ornolu (cast and chased bronze, gilded) mounts.

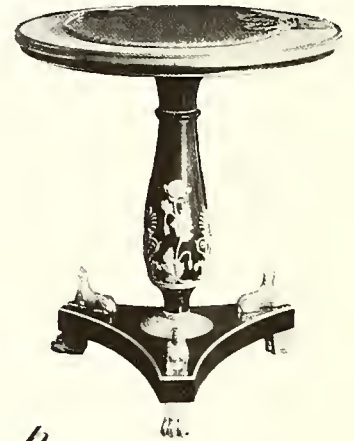
(P) Animal worship is again evident in this classic Empire lampstand. Each corner of the triangular base is supported by lion's feet and surmounted by crouching sphinxes. The elaborate mounts are of ornolu gilt and the top is of marble encircled by a brass railing. Empire designers used a variety of woods including rosewood, mahogany, fruit woods, et cetera.

(E) This ingenious piece comes from the shop which gave the first large-scale recognition to modern furniture in New York, Modernage. The two levels are cut in a pattern dear to the hearts of modern designers because it is just about the only shape never used in furniture. Artists refer to such designs as amorphous: first meaning, without definite shape. The third meaning is less equivocal.

(N, S) "A" is traditional contemporary at its worst; this is one of its better manifestations. The original Empire style was either too rich or too expensive for American taste so it was copied by American craftsmen in what the French called a debased, the Americans a refined, version. This copy of a copy has been popularized for ten years or more as Duncan Phyfe. Traces of the original brass enrichment remain.

(I) "Grand Rapids" version of the itinerant cabinetmaker's version of the early American candlestand (with variations). Exceedingly good stands closely following "O" in style are sometimes available and much more attractive. This one is more practical, especially if you have growing children or dogs about. The four legs give firmer support, the shelf helps to save space, and the whole piece is firmly built.

(H) If you will turn to "P" on the following spread you will see where Baroque supports like those on this table come from. Rare Fendal furniture is now so easily had, thanks to Gimbel's, that the dismantling of it for making one-of-a-kind nifties like this has become an art (of a sort). Naturally things of this kind come high but you can go and look at them at Carole Stupell's!



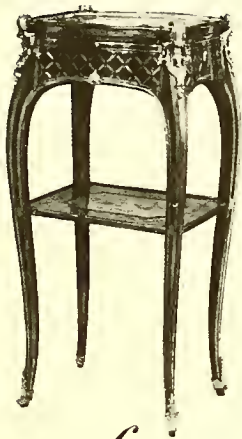
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n s



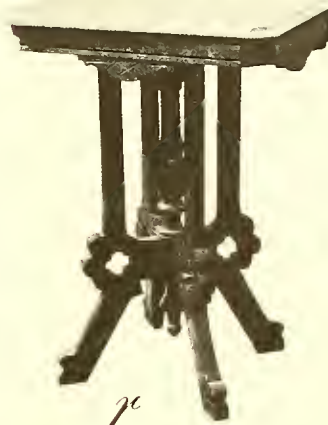
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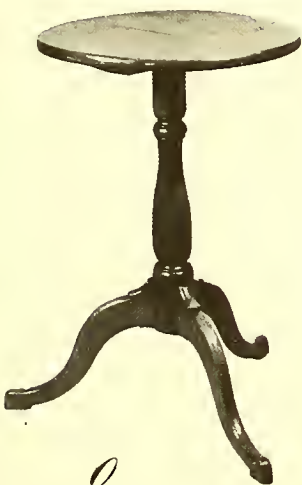
c



a



p



o



s n



t

Tables

(H) As if all that carved and gilded fretwork weren't enough, the top, which you can't see so well, is (get this, now) "inlaid with variously colored marbles, depicting a landscape with castles, trees, and a river, with small boats, and men fishing!" The catalogue does not mention fish but they're probably there because the piece is Louis XV—a period when nothing was too much trouble.

(B) A really magnificent coffee table in the modern Baroque style. Along with modern Chinese this manner seems destined to constitute the elegant mode for some years to come. A blend of Renaissance opulence, Louis XV femininity, plus a robustness almost Elizabethan, it is the decorator's and window dresser's delight. This piece from Carol Stupp.

(E) Model for much Department-store Safe, made about 1800. The vase helps to complete the department-store illusion. It is really antique but of a variety widely copied. To the facts! French Directoire table with enough bronze and bronze dore (gilt) to allow it to qualify as Empire.

(I) This is the real Department Store, closely allied to its ancestor "E" but rendered in mahogany. We're not doing complete justice to the stores because this piece was deliberately chosen from a lower-price bracket, clearly to differentiate between "E" and "I." To make amends let me say that a tyro at home furnishing couldn't do better than to go, budget in hand, to a big department-store decorator.

(F) Fifteen or twenty years ago a table such as this literally might have brought its weight in gold. At that time a perfect "tulip craze" for the really early Americana gripped the antique world. It would be hard to find an item like this today, so a quotation on its value would be folly. But a real butchery table, like the philosopher's stone, is still a synonym for the unattainable.

(A) It's discouraging to realize that the Chinese were modern so long ago that they had coffee tables (but no coffee) centuries before we did. Looks contemporary, doesn't it? It was shown in the Brooklyn Museum in a special exhibition of Chinese furniture lent by Mr. George N. Kates, and is reproduced by the courtesy of both. Kang table, "blackwood," Ch'ing dynasty (1644-1911).

(R) A glance at "F" will reward you. You will see a rude, county-turned table. But a table which was the result of such years of trial-and-error as produced the most functional of objects: sailing ships. Tables and ships were made by men who spat tobacco juice and scorned beauty as such, yet produced beauty. The designer of "R" chews only gum, never spits, but "F" is better.

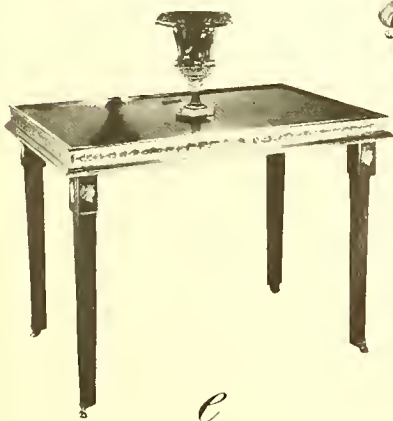
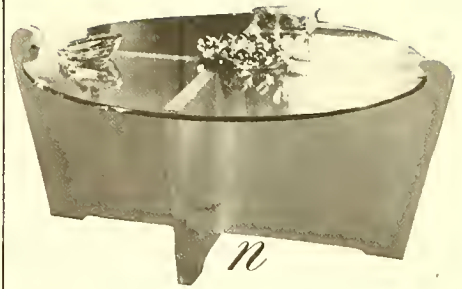
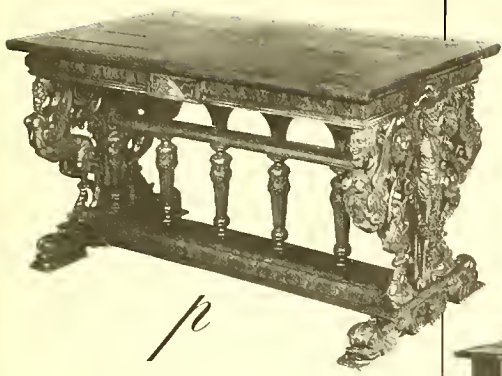
(X) This was designed by a user of marijuana. It is made of six different kinds of wood and has a plastic overlay on the top which resists acids, wood alcohol, and cigar burns. The drawer opens to reveal compartments for pinocchio and heroin decks, loaded dice, two sizes of blackjacks, and a department for miscellaneous items such as back-scratchers and gold toothpicks.

(N) This "functional" piece is notable because it is almost exactly like the one in the saloon of the presidential yacht and because it points up the use of glass and similar impervious surfaces in furniture making. Friend of mine sat on a glass table top once. I saw it happen. I haven't sat on any table since. Even sturdy ones like this! It came from Moderne in New York.

(S) Slightly distorted shot of a fine old Chippendale card table. You know the type. The upright part of the top drops. Then by means of a simple but ingenious contrivance you turn the whole top so it is supported by the length of the understructure. If it were made yesterday, it would be called newfangled. Newport, Rhode Island, c. 1760. Attributed to John Goddard.

(P) Some philosopher once said that the most fearsome things are those without names. If you ever happen to encounter a table like this you'll be able to name it. The designs are Renaissance. Got that? Made (presumably) during the reign of Henry II of France, at a time when the gloomy Gothic anthropomorph was giving way to the frightening Renaissance anthropomorph. (Y) The end of the Empire period in the United States ushered in an interregnum when the dragons, sphinxes, and lions were dying—the hard way. Some of the things that were made in the late Empire—early Victorian era were so frightful that the worst Borax of today is mild by comparison. This was thrown in as a joker. Even a Victorian fanatic should reject it.





Secretaries

(D) Modern design takes a dim view of furniture which sticks up and gives the room variety, so the usual functional writing desk is indistinguishable from sundry long cabinets ranged down one wall. This piece from Modemage is exceptional because it looks like a secretary yet fits nicely into any room in which functional furniture is at home. Shown in bleached wood.

(R) The classical Empire trend arrived in America a little late so we find its influence in furniture which was produced well within the realm of the good Queen Victoria. No less an authority than *Antiques Magazine* calls this piece a Victorian secretary, but it could so easily be called Empire that it has been included in the Empire category. Note lacquer stencils similar to those on old Hitchcock chairs.

(L) One of a pair of old Chinese chests from the collection of the Los Angeles County Museum. Our ancestors, rattling around in a large area surrounded by nature, used houses as an escape from it. At about that time the Chinese, already as congested as we are now, were thinking in modern terms about getting the garden into the house and the house into the garden.

(J) The most really frightening examples of Borax bad taste are in bedroom suits or suites, and diligent search uncovered no Borax secretary. (I know what to think.) Accordingly this horror was dreamed up by the author and executed by Mickinnon Studios. They got a lot of laughs over there and charged hardly anything for the art as a result. Ever see anything worse?

(W) This is one of the most magnificently proportioned pieces of furniture the author remembers seeing. Made about 1760, probably in Boston. The bombe base is remarkable because its curved sides were cut from thick blocks of mahogany in one piece. As a final touch the drawers are actually built to conform to the sides.

(A) Carved oak cupboard, Charles II style (English seventeenth century). People who catalogue furniture professionally have a fascinating jargon inherited from heraldic days. The design across the top is a "reciprocal trefoil" ornament. The upper cupboard doors have designs known as "strapwork." The two center panels have "crested lozenges," and the lower frieze is "unnetted" (from *Inna*).

(I) Ample evidence that Grand Rapids produces good designs when it wants to. Although much maligned because of its fame as the center of the cheap furniture industry, Grand Rapids actually produces much work far above average. The worst Borax is produced in the South. Homey furniture like this is made in several localities, notably New England. *Furniture World* lent this.

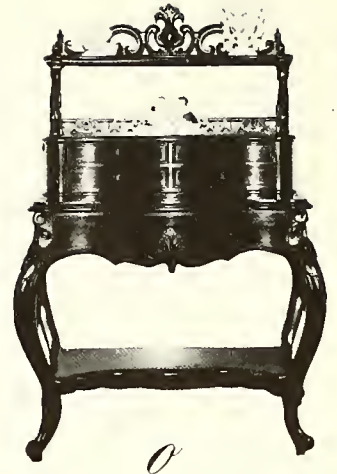
(E, W) Contemporaneously with its appearance in France the mania for Oriental design seized England. During the reign of Queen Anne lacquered Chinese and Japanese designs were used. This elaborate piece from the City Art Museum, St. Louis, was made in 1730. It is English but here typifies the (French) Monarchical state of mind. Note mirrors.

(N) Sometimes furniture has to suffer because it's practical. This well-made but "skinny" secretary was quite obviously designed to go between apartment-house windows, always placed three inches too close for any given object you might want to put there. The design for the pediment, as you can see, is almost directly derived from the classic Queen Anne piece "E" with the fancy lacquer base. "N" is a good piece and safe.

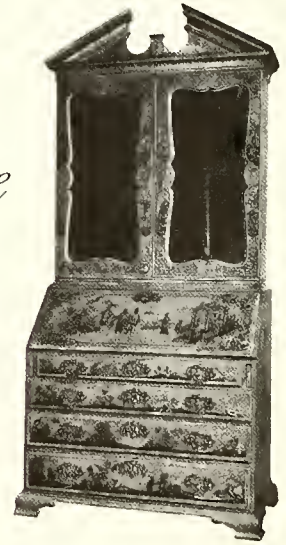
(U) Carole Stuppel is responsible for this lush Baroque credenza and mirror. The decorated glass is produced by placing decalcomanias on the rear surface, then silvering the remaining areas. An antique effect is achieved by smoking the glass slightly. This cuts down the glare and makes it possible for a nervous type like me to stay in the room.

(G) *Antiques Magazine* calls this a "bookcase-secretary" and adds that it is "Southern, rural." Never one to quarrel with my betters, I will concede this but add, in the interest of general knowledge, that I know a near counter-part which was found, in situ, in Monville, New Jersey. Maybe itinerant furniture craftsmen went South for the winter!

(O) The Victorians didn't use secretaries. They seem to have gone out at about the time Empire died, and were replaced by the desk you see here. It had one or two, rarely more, shelves for books and these were always open. In keeping with most of the Victorian items shown this is strongly Louis XV in feeling, having characteristic cabriole legs. Newark Museum, Newark, N. J.

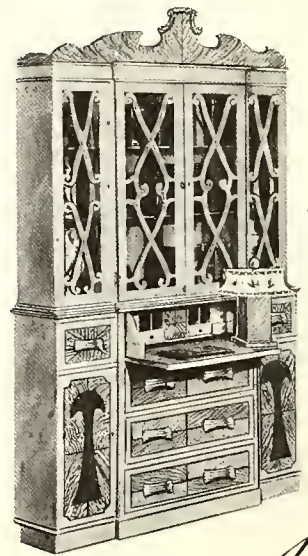


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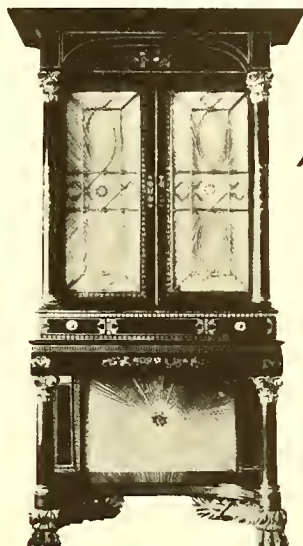
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Mirrors

(S) Contemporary mirror in the Louis XV manner. Safe frames of this sort are usually made of plaster on a base of wire. They are not quite so brittle as they appear but are not intended to survive many moves especially of the sort the Army used to give one. Frequently in traditional gold leaf, they are more effective when painted white, gray, or a pastel color.

(A) D. Milich & Son make a specialty of creating modern mirrors. This one is a particularly successful design because it could be used in several kinds of rooms without seeming out of place. It concedes a bit to Baroque and Monarchal, could mix with Homely or Safe, and yet manages to be on most intimate terms with Functional.

(R) Many of the Safe numbers previously shown were inspired by Duncan Phyfe. This one comes from Chippendale and constitutes the "uniform" for traditional mirrors. It is very attractive but very usual. The "broken arch and torch" top is a design greatly favored by eighteenth-century designers of secretaries, and the fretwork below could well have come from a secretary door.

(O, R) This bird's-eye maple veneer mirror must have been made before 1840. It was found in New Jersey and is now part of a maple bedroom owned by Miss Tempe Gerard. It is the Mellow piece par excellence. Through the years it has achieved a dark honey color which no dye known to science can duplicate. Note the characteristic hanging ring at the top.

(U) Well—it's sorta Venetian—or then, again, maybe it's 1925 coxhogue. You name it. Meanwhile, let's lump it under Borax. This mirror is typical of the border-line examples sometimes found in otherwise "Safe" homes. They come, with all their plaster-and-silver-leaf magnificence, in this form and also as three part overmantel horrors. Not good!

(I) Chippendale was given to flights of fancy which he was forced to defend in this wise: "... I have given no design but what may be executed with advantage by the hands of a skilled workman, tho' some of the profession have been diligent enough to represent them . . . as so many specious drawings impossible to be worked off by any mechanic whatsoever." Alahogany, plaster, gilt. Eighteenth century.

(E, I, O) Pedantic battles have been waged for years over "courtling mirrors." They were most commonly found in the vicinity of Salem, Massachusetts, frequently in the little pine boxes in which they were probably shipped from China. The design is similar to certain Queen Anne mirrors. No one knows if the pattern originated in China. The decorations on the glass surely did.

(L) It was probably a sacrilege to remove the original bas-relief which this frame (called professionally a tabernacle) surrounded. The frame and the missing bas-relief of a standard-type Madonna and Child were made in Florence sometime between 1427 and 1485. The sculpture was by Disiderio and the whole deal has been pictured many times.

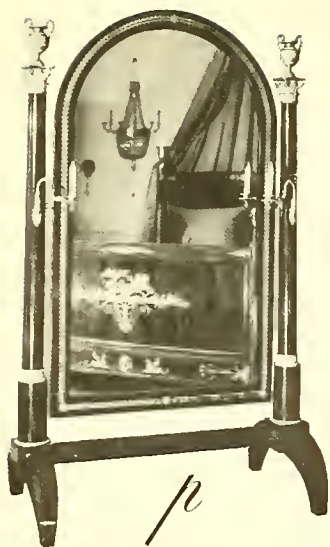
(F) Victorian mirrors were frequently made of walnut, but this one in gilded plaster was produced in a day in which the Louis XV influence pervaded the scene. The embellishments are about par for the course, being a little better than parge-work seen on the ceilings of brownstones and less good than similar work produced in France in the eighteenth century.

(T) The lush decor in this advanced modern form is a direct swipe from the eighteenth-century Baroque, a style which decreased in luxuriance and extravagance as it progressed northward from Italy, its progenitor. It gave rise to Louis XV, which in turn became Queen Anne in England, and later Chip-pendale in England, then America. This is a coarse modern adaptation.

(P) Pier glass in the true Empire fashion. It lacks animals but adheres to the classic motifs by using urns as finials to the pseudo-cornithian columns which support the mirror proper. Elsewhere the typical Empire bronze dore embellishments will be noticed. The mirror itself is gilded, and the candle-holders are supported by acanthus shaped sockets. Very fine.

(C) The close affinity between "Homely" and "Ship-shape" is remarked upon in the analyses pertinent to the style in the back of the book. Nautical ideas are frequently met with in this homely type of furniture. Notable are double-decker bunks for children (and others), nautical lamps simulating running lights, and this ship's-wheel mirror.





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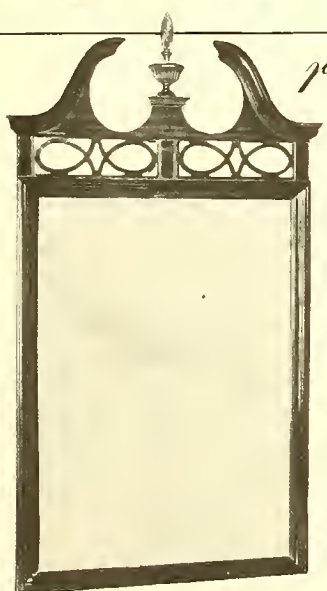
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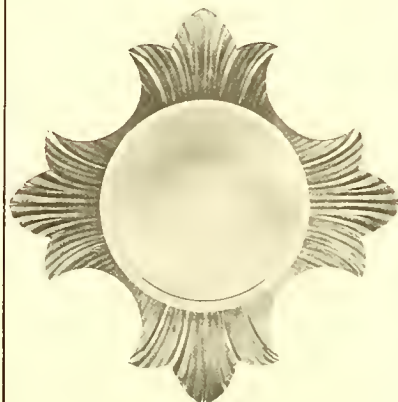
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Teapots

(L) Discriminating Americans concerned with other things than age per se will call this typical Victorian teapot awkward. It is obviously top-heavy, having a swollen appearance above the pedestal. Its lid is unnecessarily huge. Collectors in pursuit of consistency will overlook this and gloat over its charming enrichment. It was made in Philadelphia.

(F) This hot-water kettle has been snatched ruthlessly from its charming base so that it would be more comparable to other items. It represents the Baroque state of mind, but lovers of Monarchial or Patriarchal might choose it. Actually it was made in 1761 and would be called George III.

Designs like these, hammered out from the inside, are called repousse and are still popular.

(O) An object lesson on how the prevailing taste of the day can subtly modify classic forms. This represents Safe because "Tiffany" is always safe on anything and because it is so typical of the "salable" kind of object. It sets out to be in the Colonial taste but somehow gets too tall and finally acquires a coat of gilt over its silver. Made in the last twenty years.

(A) Sparkling brass for the Homely room! Old taproom and kitchen utensils come to us chiefly from England and the Continent. They serve to give a room the same "living" quality that can otherwise be had only from a crackling fire. The Peg Woffington Coffee House polishes a battery of these every day as a symbol of oldtime hospitality. Don't let yours get green! Not smart any more!

(M) This delightfully squat and somehow modern teapot was made in China in the Ch'ing dynasty (eighteenth century). As you can see, it is cleverly designed to simulate bamboo. As you can't see, it is pewter, much used in Chinese metal objects. The lining of this piece is of pottery, preferred by modern teamakers too. Los Angeles County Museum.

(I) This wonderful (and overwhelming) pot is typical American Empire. It was presented to the captain of the ship *Courier* by his passengers after a trip from Liverpool to New York in 1819. The inscription refers to these facts and to the gratitude felt by the voyagers. It must have been a rough trip.

Empire animals are well represented, with fruit thrown in.

(N) No disparager of the modern trend can object to this beautifully designed and executed piece from Georg Jensen. It is part of a matching set (with tray) rendered in silver and plastic. Squat (to eliminate tipping), smooth (for ease in cleaning), and with hand-shaped handle, it is easily the most practical item shown on these two pages.

(K) It wasn't expected that this would fool a soul. It's not silver but pottery—of a particularly nauseous shade of robin's-egg blue, and it cost \$2.39 at the local five, dime, and up store. After being photographed it was offered to Miss Grace Elliott, housemaid, who knows Borax when she sees it. She respectfully, but firmly, declined it.

(T) Regardless of your taste elsewhere, you most likely picked this one. It is a classic example of fine teapot design and has probably been reproduced in books on antiques more times than all of the others put together. It is (surprisingly) of pewter but has a high luster. Made by William Will (1742-98) in Philadelphia. From the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

(D. A) This is repousse, too, but of a different sort from "C" or "F," for instance. The raised designs were pricked there by an unknown Pennsylvania craftsman in a day when a real native folk art flourished among the Pennsylvania Dutch. It's tin and exceedingly fitting for a Mellow living room. Like a warming pan, it won't be used.

(S) The Federal point of view is adequately represented here by a tankard. (Who ever heard of a knight drinking tea?) It was made in Hamburg in 1675 or thereabouts and could be called Baroque as well as Federal because of its repousse designs and gilding. There's a coat of arms on the top. Very beautiful and only somewhat unfashionable.

(C) Typically Louis XV and of the very finest sort. For ingenuity and grace of design this comes close to taking the palm. Note the clever way in which one spring of leaves becomes the spout and the other forms the handle. Made about 1756-57 by Thomas Germaine, this is the archetype of great silver-smithing.





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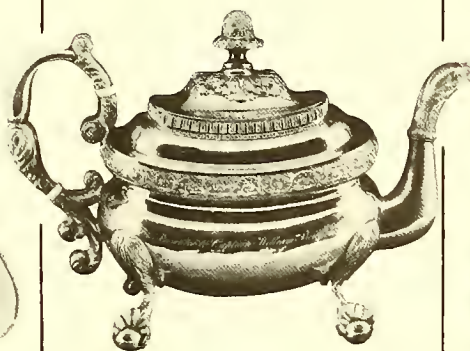
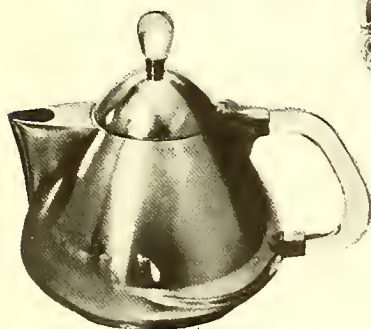


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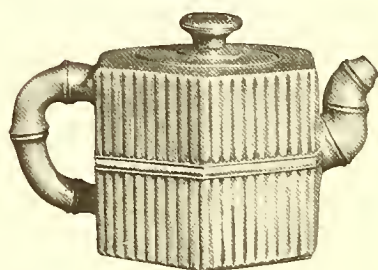
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Vases

(N, 11) Sèvres compote in a design very characteristic of Empire. Note the lion's head on the base, and the embellishments to right and left. The angels are of bisque to simulate marble and the basket itself is of a pattern which turned up much later as a classic Sandwich glass pattern here in America. This was made in 1805; the Sandwich imitations started much later.

(O) Sixteenth-century wine ewer with decorations depicting the nymph Echo and the dying Narcissus. Echo is dressed in orange-yellow robes (sort of a shell station effect) and the other predominant colors are also typically Feudal: cobalt blue, sepia, yellow-orange, green, and eggplant. (Only you never say eggplant. The word to collectors is "ambergreen." It's more mysterious.) Utterly splendid, utterly repulsive, and completely Monarchial. I am not carping at the workmanship or the color of this piece, but at the nauseating, pasty-white faces of the satyrs which appear at the shoulders. But for the horns, which ingeniously form the handles, they could be the embalmers' heads of two fruit pedlars. (Sèvres, late eighteenth century.)

(H, N) This is the English counterpart of the French classicism prevalent in the closing years of the reign of Louis XVI and carrying over through the Revolution into the Empire. It was made between 1785 and 1790 by Wedg-wood, one of the great English potters. The motif at the top is elaborated Roman egg-and-dart, the garlands pure Louis XVI. Green and white.

(D) Lightly frosted on the outside and shiny on the inside, and very black except for gold studs. Typical of the severity of the models which were de-signed some years ago to accompany the Functional trend. Of late this kind of design happily has been abandoned by such pioneers as Corning, who have produced clear glass in the Swedish mode.

(S) Between the years 1876-80 Bohemia, glass center of the world at that time, sent to America merchandise to the value of almost three million dollars. Ruby glass overlaid with white glass cut away in patterns is usually Bohemian and can be found anywhere. This otherwise charming specimen has a snake wound around it. The design is Gothic. Minute quantities of gold and reheating produced the ruby color.

(A) Modern Baroque candle shield of blown glass with metal base in the classic acanthus-leaf pattern. Used here to exemplify the Baroque trend because much more in character than any available vases. The base is painted in a new and very smart color which could be approximated by mixing two parts pure green, two parts white, one part black.

(E) Here's the horror for the group. Actually it's not bad sculpture, if you like your sculpture crude, but it's a florist's vase; cheap and impermanent as to design. If it didn't have that ridiculous swan growing out of the formless shrubbery! This piece cost fifty-nine cents, is now a part of the permanent collection of Miss Grace Elliott, housemaid.

(M) The eminently Safe pattern made by a firm which knows how to hedge its bets for the department-store trade. Here we have a vase which could be at home in any decor, high-style for none. On a modern shape, Monarchial patterns have been applied in old rose. Very practical for a wedding gift if you don't know the bride's taste.

(C) The enormous charm which crude mishapen old pieces have for some people is probably due in part to their obviously hand-wrought origin. A handmade thing is rarely cheap. This wouldn't be, for it is very old South Jersey glass, possibly even Wistarberg, and was made no later than 1780, no earlier than 1759. It is sometimes called "milk glass."

(L) This is commonly called "hobnail" glass. It was the nicest of the cheap sets some years before the war, when you could get a vase like this, a foot high, for \$1.29. It is perfect with Hominy rock maple, and really looks antique. If you're that easily amused you can get a laugh out of pricing it now at secondhand shops.

(B) The Emperor Kang-hsi of the Ch'ing dynasty was born in 1654, died in 1722. He encouraged the art of the potter. Some of the finest Chinese forms were produced under his reign. This vase, which was once exhibited at the Victoria and Albert Museum, is an excellent example of the period. Its colors are not rare, but the off-met-with blue and white. Carved teakwood stand.

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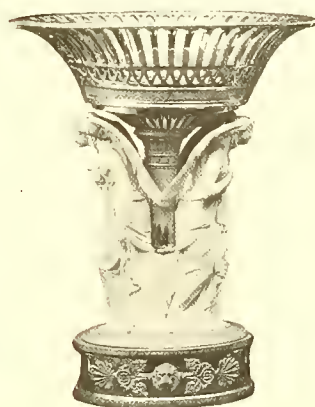
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Lamps

(N) An undiscerning person might compare this to "E" on the vase spread and wonder why the vase is bad and this good. The answer is involved. Simply stated, this is a superior design—its finish is better—it was harder to make. It is Baroque, of course, and was manufactured by Edward Krumpke, specialists in the ornamental plaster so much in demand today.

(Y, O) Wedgwood Argand burner lamps made in the early nineteenth century. Closely allied to Empire in feeling but suitable to accompany Patriotic items previously chosen. This is the whale-oil lamp par excellence and the forerunner of the kerosene lamps you remember if you were a kid when I was. Very beautiful, but a little impractical as a modern lighting fixture.

(O, Y) Characteristic Empire astral lamp in marble and cast bronze with shade of frosted and cut glass. The little embellishments which hang down all around when they aren't dropping off and getting broken are very charming. They were an attractive idea then, and are still being used on contemporary lamps (from which they still drop).

(A) Functional lamp in pickled wood. The design is typical of modern European thinking. It was particularly prevalent in Poland, Germany, and Scandinavian countries before the war. "Surface interest" is slowly creeping back into contemporary functional pieces. This is a very happy thing. After all, there won't be any dust to catch in the home of tomorrow!

(D) An exception to the rule that "an antique is something old enough to have been Grandma's." Fragile antiques are sometimes collected by people old enough to have bought them when new! That's because so few delicate things last. Lamps like this were sold in country stores as late as 1910, but they bring pretty high prices now. Call it Victorian!

(T) This type of antique reached the zenith of its popularity in a day which approved of those lampshades. That's one date for you! The other date is for when it was made: late seventeenth century. It's Spanish and made of wrought iron. It was originally intended to hold torches (or maybe candles). Sold at one of Gimbel's famous liquidations of a collector's estate.

(H) If there had been a shade, collectors of rare Sandwich glass would not have been able to tell this from one of the imitations which so cheapened a once-rare and charming piece of Americana. It's a "dolphin" whale-oil lamp made sometime between 1825 and 1840. These lamps came in brilliant blue, "vaseline," and transparent white glass.

(P, B) This might be called French Victorian since it was made in the nineteenth century. It is classed as Monarchial because it is a real hang-over from the seventeenth-century styles. It was transformed from antique vase to modern lamp by the addition of electricity and a hand-tailored shade of silk. Responsible parties: Anglo-Persian Mercantile Company.

(B, P) This is the mass-produced counterpart of "P." You will find it in the best stores and the worst living rooms. For some reason or other hand painting on china is a thing which induces the creeps in most discriminating people except in dinner service plates where it is still an art. There's no logic in style, is there?

(I) Cast and polished brass with parchment-paper shade. The latter has had a botanical print affixed to it. Sometimes such prints are genuine, sometimes very poor copies. The difference is immaterial these days, since anyone who looks closely at a flower or fruit print has very little to occupy his mind. Brass is definitely Homely.

(U) It says here (on the shade): "May you live practically forever." The warrior and the horse are a close copy of similar statuettes produced in the Sui and Tang periods. They were made of pipe clay and occasionally glazed. Touches of color were added. This is a fitting accessory to a Chinese Modern room—more so than a Ming vase. Carole Stuppell.

(E, Y, O) The vase is very similar to old Crown Derby styles—may be an original. It is the ideal "Safe" lamp because it would fit into an Empire, Regency, Patriotic, or Monarchial room without strain. The base may have been added—should have been there all along. It came from Macy's Corner Shop and is about the best of the Safe items shown.





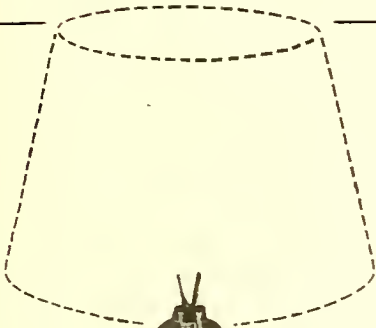
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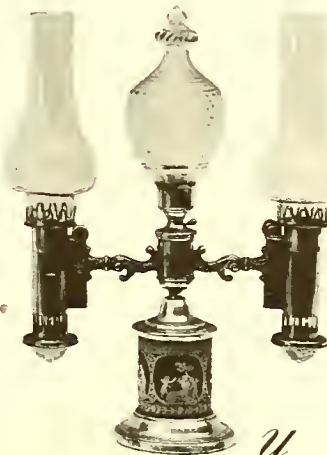
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Fabrics

(S, U, R) "Rug crafters" reproduce period rugs exactly but offer them to you sans wear, mysterious stains, possible vermin. This leaves only one possible choice to a rational buyer of Homey rugs. The design is a crude back-country copy of Baroque and Monarchial forms and identifies the original period as Victorian. Pershable things in Farmhouse Victorian are often used with more durable but earlier furniture, to form Mellow rooms.

(R) This may have proved to be a bit of a joker. It's a Paisley shawl (required reading: Silas Marner) and was regarded as the essence of con- trated Victorian twenty years ago. In fact, it was the only Victorian thing then collected. The pattern which says "nineteenth century" today is more apt to be a plaid, since women's dresses in that day often utilized plaid silks.

(X) If it were shown here it would be a giveaway, but in the back of the book you will find the original Gagnin painting from which this block print is derived. It's advanced modern for America, although Gagnin died in 1903. Considering this, it doesn't seem logical to sneer at the crossroads farmer who adopts New York or Detroit trends three, not forty-three, years late. From Modenage.

(E, U, S) In spite of strikes, shortages, and a public which will buy any- thing at all, some fabric decorators with the right fabric. This was painstakingly pre- pared for "patricians," and they had better use it because authentic patterns are not easy to come by these days.

(O) The American woman's taste in stockings and (often) in dress is amazingly good. Would an American woman buy a cotton stocking with shiny listle designs running up the sides? No! Would she buy an upholstery fabric glittering with shiny rayon—in strident colors? Why, yes, frequently, if she has Borax tastes. For shame!

(N, I, E, D) J. H. Thorp & Company, Inc., coming through again, this time with the perfect Empire design. Large patterns such as this are a trial to upholsterers and an expense to the purchaser, both of whom must wrestle with the problem of centering the design and throwing away the surplus. It's worth it, however, when you have a beautiful Empire chair or sofa.

(C, R) Quilted satin. Baroque as ever was and rich! Expensive material showing evidence of effort is an infallible recipe for producing very desirable things. If well-accepted motifs are added the item becomes almost automati- cally chic. Not everyone would want such a rich fabric as this. It might out- class the rest of the place! (From Thorp.)

(L) Chinese symbolism on a richly embroidered and gold-worked mandarin coat. (Tao Kuang.) The stripes are waves which break into foam (the pattern just above the stripes). Just above the clouds float fragments of blossoms, "Ling Chih" fungus, Buddhist emblems, and a dragon in hot pursuit of a jewel. It says here.

(I, A) The follies and frivolity of the French court are memorialized in this Audusson tapestry of the Louis XVI period. A game of blindman's buff in a glade is typical of the phony bucolics of the period. Tapestries were origi- nally a means of keeping out drafts. When used today, they are usually per- manently fastened to the wall by a frame of molding.

(A, E, I) The Federal frame of mind is exemplified here by a truly mag- nificent piece of Renaissance fabric. It hung in an Italian hall in the late fifteenth century. The designs, in red velvet and cloth of gold, may be identi- fied if you look closely. Pineapple-and-carnation medallions are supported by pairs of ribbons. The crossed bands have leaf scroll embroidery.

(D) A little too good for the average purchaser of Safe but perfect for this class because it uses Federal stripes and the carnations dear to both Federal and Monarchial designers. Flowers are also popular with the Chinese and very Patrician. How can you lose? This is actually two fabrics, both from Thorp, and very attractive indeed.

(U, N, E, S) Toile de Jouy, a cotton fabric printed from copper engrav- ings, was in great favor in Washington's time and later. Originally made in France, its motifs were planned with an eye to export. This is typical of the sort that reached these shores, but praise be, it's a reproduction made to order for Mellow, Empire, Patrician, and Homey fanciers. From J. H. Thorp.

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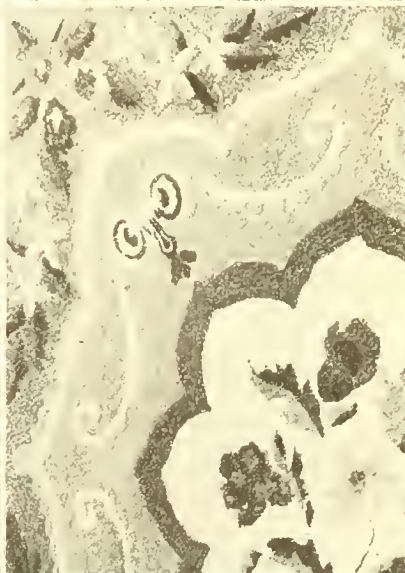
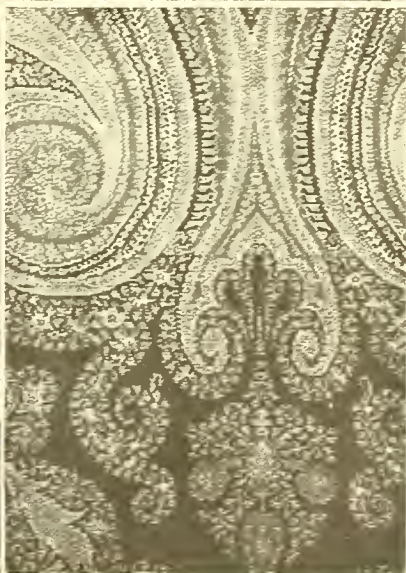


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Pictures

(S, W) The dashing young man in the scarlet uniform couldn't be more appropriate for an Empire room. Apart from the manifest correctness of the period, there's dark hair and lots of gold glitter to tie in with mahogany and brass. The officer is nameless. The picture was made by Sir Martin Archer Shee, P.R.A. (Irish, 1769-1850) and as a painting of the period is only fair, although this was painted in a century which produced Feudal things. (For our purpose Feudal ended in 1650.) During the twenties many artists found profitable employment imitating these somber but beautiful pictures, so the discovery of a very inexpensive one should not surprise you. This, of course, is genuine.

(W, S) The Ancestor! If genuine and a bona-fide progenitor, one of these (especially one by John Singleton Copley, 1738-1815) is tangible evidence that the money and the breeding are still in the family. Loss of either would have caused its sale for thousands of dollars long ago. This portrait of Samuel Verplanck is good but not one of Copley's best. Patrician.

(T) Appropriately framed in the original red-painted pine frame this genuine Currier & Ives print might be selected for either a Homely or Mellow room. It is much less valuable than the primitive painting "N1" used to typify Mellow and therefore more at home with the honest modern maple style.

(K) The Oriental peoples have never felt the urge to imitate nature closely, preferring to use it as an inspiration for formal designs. In the East even portraits are highly stylized. The West is slowly learning that imitation may be flattery but not necessarily art. This is a section of a very valuable Coromandel screen (up to forty coats of lacquer, carved and enameled).

(A) The mahogany, gold, and white frame was retained because the picture would be relatively meaningless without it. It's pure (and very good) Victorian, as you know, or go to the bottom of the class. The flowers are made of feathers, one of sundry unorthodox materials favored by readers of Godey's Lady's Book. Others were shells, seaweed, leaves, and yarn. Nifties like this are sometimes made into coffee tables.

(M1) A "primitive" is a painting into which a very bad painter has put an enormous amount of loving care and hard labor. Its charm is indefinable. As in the case of hand-blown glass it may be due, at least in part, to the evident effort that went into it. The subject, too, is charming here. The painting's age places this in the Mellow category. Owned by Mr. and Mrs. Leslie Gill.

(E) Julian Levy, the painter (not to be confused with Julian Levy of the art gallery) is one of America's best moderns. He blends a strange but fastidious realism with a delightful mystic quality. Then he applies both to subject matter which you would have chosen yourself if you had thought of it first. "Margaret Bonn Plays the Recorder," Albright Museum, Buffalo. Photo courtesy Downtown Galleries.

(O) No "cassel painter" has ever equaled Frederick J. Waugh's popularity record. For six years he won first place in public balloting at Carnegie Institute's great Annual International Exhibition. He has been deprecated as "another Winslow Homer," but many critics and the author think he handles water far better. This is his "Morning Tide," which should be seen in full color.

(N) This one is not only an old painting, but it also represents a nearly obsolete art form—the miniature. It was made by Gardelli after an original by Clouet and shows King Francis I of France on horseback. The original, or a similar painting, very large and surrounded by a worn-eaten frame, would be ideal over a Feudal mantel.

(Y) Modern Baroque taste is expressed by this cut-out steel engraving pasted to the back of a glass which was then silvered. It is one of a pair designed and made by the artists Dily and Leslie Gill at least eight years before the public thought of it. An example of the way artists' tastes often predict and sometimes make a trend.

(X) This painting is not bad enough to be a primitive, not realistic enough to be popular, and not original enough to be good. It was painted by an old sign painter who died (probably of frustration) when he had finished it. It will be selected by Borax lovers because it is a very bad piece of painting.



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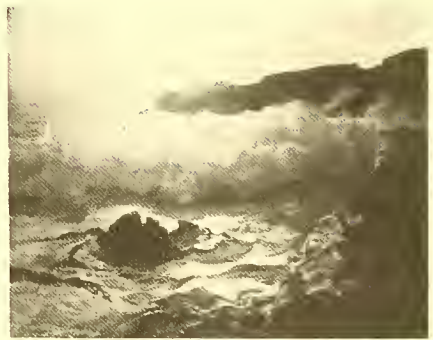
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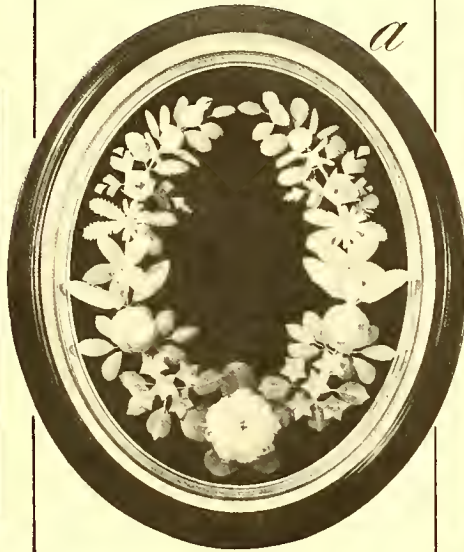
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The Answers

The nice thing about the furniture test you have just taken is that you are not expected to come up to any particular score. All you must do to determine your taste preference is to find out which type of furniture got the largest number of votes from you. To help you do this a table of odd but easily remembered code words has been arranged. Take number one ("rental embulk") as an example: if you suspect Oriental furniture is your dish, go through the pages you've just studied. "Rental embulk" will prove to spell out twelve pieces of Oriental furnishings. The number of misses you make is a significant indication of your knowledge of your chosen field, but does not condemn your taste. You may never have given a thought to furnishing a home! Section Two, which included some furniture, is the gauge of your all-round sophistication.

However, you should not attempt to furnish

a home unaided unless you were fairly consistent in your choices here.

Suppose you start with a score of 10 for each consistent choice. There are 12 choices, so your total possible score is 120. Subtract 10 for each *different* type of furniture you select. If you picked 12 different kinds your score would be zero.

To make it possible to achieve a "below-zero" score it is suggested that you subtract 20 for each Borax item you pick!

On this basis you should score over 70 to be safe. A score between 30 and 70 is dangerous; less than 30 hopeless.

When you have determined your category, look up its number on the chart. Then put that number in front of the two which you already have and look up the complete number in the back of the book. Read. Now wait until morning before writing to the publisher!

Oriental	1	R	E	N	T	A	L	E	M	B	U	L	K
Functional	2	O	D	D	E	N	D	A	N	D	A	X	E
Borax	3	B	O	R	A	X	J	U	K	E	B	O	X
Safe	4	W	H	E	N	I	N	R	O	M	E	D	O
Homey	5	E	M	P	I	R	I	C	A	L	I	S	T
Baroque	6	L	U	S	H	B	U	T	F	A	N	C	Y
Feudal	7	C	L	U	M	P	A	L	S	O	T	A	N
Patrician	8	G	R	A	S	S	W	I	T	H	Y	E	W
Monarchial	9	P	S	Y	C	H	E	S	C	U	P	I	D
Empire	10	D	A	M	P	E	R	P	I	N	O	N	S
Mellow	11	A	C	T	O	F	G	O	D	C	H	U	M
Victorian	12	S	T	O	R	Y	O	F	E	S	D	R	A

An example:

Fair in Section One	=	2
Good in Section Two	=	1
Your number up to now	=	21
You just chose 9 (Monarchial)		
Your complete number	=	921

As a game, the whole book may be used. There are 56 tests (if you consider only one category in Section Three). Give yourself 10 for each right decision, deducting 10 for each additional category, and 20 for each Borax object chosen in Section Three. Anything

over 500 is phenomenal; over 400, very good; over 300, fair; below 300, not good.

If you have a long evening ahead of you and want to try to guess all the categories in Section Three (instead of just one), your possible (at 10 per win) score is 1,900.

Your ratings:

0 — 300	=	Hopeless
300 — 700	=	Not quite hopeless
700 — 1,100	=	Pretty good
1100 — 1,500	=	Remarkable
1500 — 1,900	=	Become a consulting decorator immediately!



The first American ship to cast anchor in Chinese waters was the *Empress of China* out of New York. She arrived at Macao on August 23, 1784. By that time Thomas Chippendale's *The Gentleman and Cabinet Maker's Director* (1754) had influenced British and American taste for thirty years. Chippendale's designs were a blend of French, Gothic, and Chinese, with the latter predominating. Thus, directly or indirectly, American taste has been exposed to the Chinese for nearly two hundred years. Oriental furniture has been ensconced in New England parlors so long that it is collected as early Americana.

Fifty years ago Chinese, Japanese, and Near East décor was the rage of the moment, a revival heavily influencing art forms here and abroad. Whistler painted, Debussy and Mahler composed, in the Oriental idiom. Japanese prints, Chinese wall scroll portraits, bamboo screens, temple gongs, and Buddhas were everywhere. Few homes today are free from lingering evidences of this craze.

Small wonder that Far East furniture is more readily assimilated than most other exotic kinds. Drop a Swedish peasant table or an Italian Renaissance chair into a standard American room and the effect is startling. But teakwood and lacquer and bamboo have been there

for years—pass without comment. Oriental goes well with Mellow, Patrician, Safe, and Functional. With care it is often blended with Victorian, Baroque, Monarchial. It is less happy with Borax, Honey, and Feudal; not recommended as part of an Empire room. Most important—Oriental is at home in almost any kind of house in the city or country.

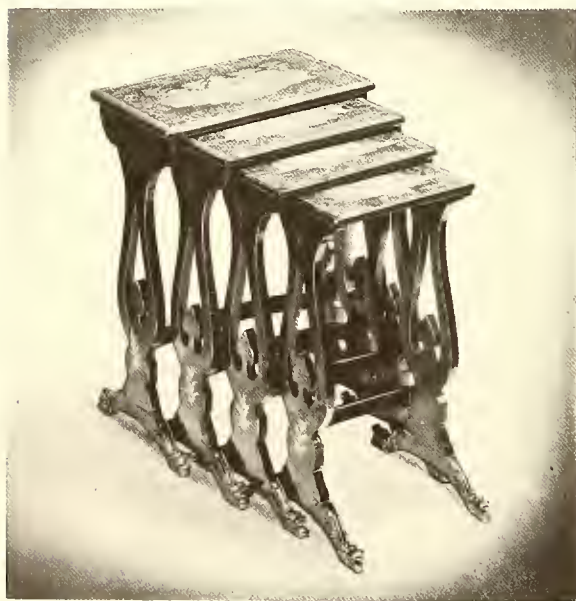
America's fluctuating but continuous interest in Asiatic things is probably due to be stimulated by the latest wave of returning adventurers. The South Pacific, the Philippines, China, and Japan have been ransacked for native objects. With these as an incentive to new home decorators we may look to more and better Oriental rooms.

Discouraging to lovers' of Asiatic art is the fact that the best is hard to come by even in big centers and that smaller shopping centers, having few calls for it, do not stock it at all. Even the ten-cent stores, cut off for years from their source of supply, have few Chinese objects. Their Japanese stock went into hiding on December 7, 1941, a matter of small moment to anyone with a taste for the better things.

A serious deterrent to those who wish to go overboard for Asia is the fact that accessible and authentic objects are limited for the most part to incidental pieces. In the opinion of the writer, this is as well. Oriental philosophy for thousands of years has encouraged a school of furniture design which its admirers might char-

acterize as chaste, but which those less sympathetic are more inclined to call stark, rigid, unyielding, hard. Certain it is that it needs the relief graciously provided in its homeland by dextrous arrangements of flowers. Few Americans have the time, patience, ability, or money to keep the right sort of cherry blossoms on a chest which cries out for them. They prefer to do their softening by methods less pleasing to the furniture and easier on the housekeeper. This is where the more graceful, yielding shapes of lighter Occidental furniture can help and where "Chinese modern," made here, is useful.

111 ☞ Your taste is gentle, delicate, refined, exotic. On the whole, probably more so than that of most readers of this book. The Chinese would probably call it "Chientan—simple and mild." Although you chose Oriental objects in preference to others you have had the subtlety to blend fine Occidental things with those of the Orient. In your home a beautiful gilt Buddha does not rest, of necessity, upon a carved teak stand; you may have placed it upon a mellow bleached-walnut wall bracket from France. The floor covering may be the best China has to offer, but it may also be plain



Nested tables like these came from China in clipper ships along with tea.

seamless carpet in soft jade green. The strident and the shocking have no place in your cool, charming rooms. Red lacquer vases and bronze tripods are used sparingly if at all. Most characteristic of all: **THE JADE IN YOUR HOME IS JADE!**

112 ☞ Sophistication, in which you made only a passing grade, is less of an asset in the field you've selected than in most of the other categories, especially if you are discriminating in Oriental art. This is a matter which I am forced to leave to you for an honest appraisal. The greater your consistency in selecting Oriental objects the safer the ground you walk on, especially if you propose to live in purely Oriental rooms. Of course few people wish such a style; it's "hard," to what Orientals choose to call our soft, Occidental taste. There's another reason: you'll get tired of explaining that, "Yes, I lived in the Orient for years," or, "No, I just like Oriental things." You'll be a little odd, you see. If you feel a bit foreign to this country, don't have your roots in our culture—you may be happy with such an exotic background. Monarchical would suit you too. Perhaps you have the discrimination necessary to a happy blending of the two.

Your basic taste is excellent, leading one to suspect that your lack of sophistication is caused by disinterest—quite a different thing from active bad taste. In other words, your taste in modern matters could be good if you wished to take the time. Perhaps you approach the true ideal of the ancient Chinese poets and are living in withdrawn satisfaction with your lot amid your well-loved treasures. May I have a feel of that jade you're stroking?

113 ☞ Your good basic taste but insufficient sophistication could be explained by the fact that you are Oriental. Or that your absorption with Oriental art has blinded you to the niceties of modern American taste. Stick to Oriental standards and you'll do well in decorating. Attempt to cross Asia with Madison Avenue and you may go to pieces. Best advice to you would be to be very consistent—or to add only such Occidental things as blend well with Oriental.

Functional, or "Chinese modern" especially, is recommended. You say you've already done that? I'm not surprised. Your basic taste, you see, is very good indeed.

121 ☞ You're likely to go wrong on the arrangements. And possibly on the color. Both are likely to be too flamboyant. The things you buy will be excellent. You'll go to reputable dealers and pay well. You'll be a collector: sword guards, Ming vases, wall scrolls, Mandarin coats. These will be excellent, well displayed. But watch out for the charm of the room. Keep it quiet. Soft colors are the best complement to hard objects. The Chinese have raised art to a philosophy of life by combining the formal with the yielding, the delicate with the rugged, small amounts of vivid and brittle with larger amounts of delicately dull and soft. You do that too.

122 ☞ At its worst, your room will be well-ordered, Oriental. But a well-ordered, purely Oriental room is not very fashionable just now. There is a certain lack of originality—a feeling that anyone could do the same if they knew a good dealer in teakwood and porcelain.

Personally, I dislike Van Gogh paintings very much. But you'll get the idea when I say that a Van Gogh print in a white-and-terra-cotta-smearred, gold-flecked, rococo frame, very large, might make your room. Or perhaps it needs a black rug. Or sprigged silk curtains.

If I had a Chinese room I would bow low from the waist to the spirits of Panch'iao, Ch'ingt'en, Suiyüan, and introduce a splendid object in silver-gray created out of driftwood by the sea and fittingly mounted on a square mahogany base. Or I might use a modern screen of pickled wood rods, standing upright and lashed together with rope. If I had a cheap, badly decorated china god, I might (just might, you understand; I've never seen such a thing), I might paint it terra-cotta red, throw tradition to the wind, and trace an ivy vine on it in white enamel. Come to think of it, I believe that would be very nice.



The Chinese influence at work on an otherwise Functional design.

123 ☞ You've got an idea in your head. Stick to it. But learn all you can about your subject. Your idea is original enough to put you in a higher bracket than your score indicates. It takes originality and courage just to decide to go Oriental. You'll need courage, if not originality, to carry out your plans. Your score: fair in basic taste, bad in sophistication indicates little more than that you have courage. The kind of originality you're going to need calls for covering a screen with small squares of gold-leaf paper—maybe nothing else—maybe a silhouetted four-color reproduction of a blue vase in the middle. Or maybe it just adds up to using huge (and I mean huge—three or four inches in diameter) pieces of bamboo as vases. You won't fulfill the requirements if you go only as far as buying a Chinese screen intact, or using bamboo mats on the tables.

131 ☞ You know about things but your basic taste is, bluntly, bad. You know how bad because you just took the test. If you were very, very bad and your sophistication was very, very good, your room is going to be a pretty awful clutter of very fine things. There will be too many of them and their relation to each other is likely to be a matter of grave concern to the shade of Chin Shengt'an.

Chin Shengt'an once listed thirty-three happy moments—moments in which he considered “the spirit inextricably tied up with the senses.” One of these was “to watch someone writing big characters a foot high.” You may not share Chin’s simple taste in pleasures but, say, don’t you think very pale one-foot Chinese characters painted on an otherwise innocent white wall would be charming? All right, then clear away all that clutter and mix up some pale green paint. Now go out on the balcony and look at the moon for at least thirty minutes. Better have some wisteria around. Now come back and put this on the wall in one-foot characters:

道
簡
陳

For these words and for Chin (and his delightful “happy moments”) I am forever in debt to China’s greatest philosopher and exponent—Lin Yutang.

132 ☞ Keep away from Jap rolling-ball alleys, Atlantic City auction rooms, and ten-cent stores.

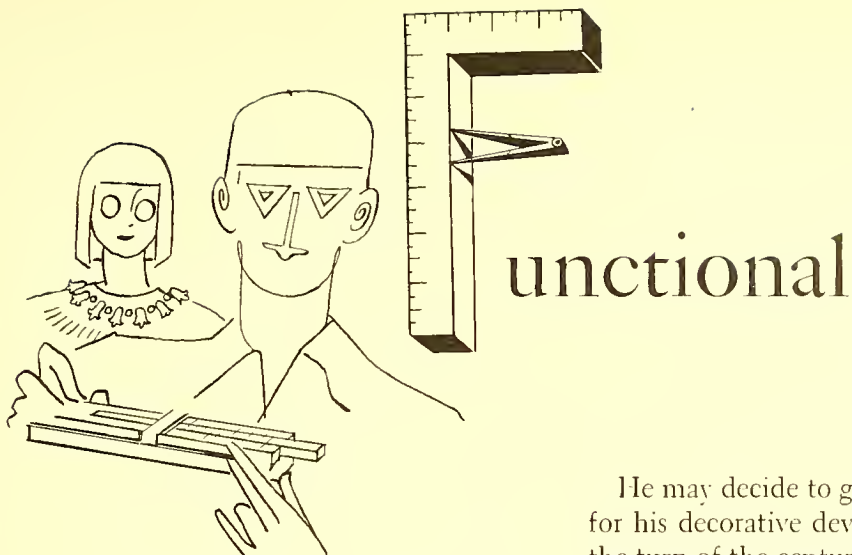
There’s a word used by old-time sailors to

describe a quality of elegance and (forgive the word) “class” in sailing vessels. The word is “yar.” I wonder if it came into English by way of the American sailors who dealt with that splendid Chinese gentleman Houqua so many years ago in the Canton of 1785 to 1840. The Chinese say “ya” when they wish briefly to describe gentility and elegance.

You ain’t got it. Not right now, at least, and on the basis of the tests set up in this book. Very hard tests, though! You take them again one year from now and you’ll have “ya.”

Meanwhile, watch out for those enormous Philippine chairs with the “peacock” backs. You have to build a room around them. Tile floor and everything! And teak can be *unlovely*. Don’t try to make an Oriental room by throwing a dark, inlaid, and overelaborate Near East tabouret into too close conjunction with chaste Chinese or Japanese objects. They aren’t of the same breed. Confucius and harems don’t mix!

133 ☞ There’s more to the art of the Orient than flowery patterns and cheap brass and porcelain. I hope you’ll study it well and buy sparingly of good things rather than fret the room with gewgaws. One good ivory fan in a shadow box is worth a dozen Japanese miniature gardens. I hope all my readers will eschew the latter—at least in the debased bastard form found in many Jap shops. They are very, very corny. If you are still speaking to me I’ll reiterate a note of caution which should be valuable to anyone who scored as badly as you did: restraint; subtlety; fewer things and better ones.



There are two principal ways of creating a salable object. The first, which has been in use for thousands of years, is the easy, safe, and by-no-means-bad system known as eclecticism. Eclecticism is a high-flown way of saying that the designer selects what he thinks best of previous styles and co-ordinates. This, in turn, is a high-flown way of saying that he gyps things instead of creating them. For years the public has provided the eclectic designer with plenty of custom, because of its very human desire to be right. Especially with large sums of dough it likes to be right! So the Greeks copied the Egyptian furniture and the Romans copied the Greek furniture and everyone has been copying everyone else ever since. When the automobile was invented it had a dashboard, although the reason for a dashboard was already on its way out with the English sparrows. It took some years to eliminate brass carriage lamps. The engine is still (as of 1946) in front, because that's where the horse was. That's eclecticism. Very sensible, people being the way they are. Mice! And that's one way of designing.

What happens when a brave, independent man says, "Let us forget all the outworn and outmoded anachronisms which clutter up our homes and start fresh?" Several things which will be explained as briefly as possible.

He may decide to go back to original sources for his decorative devices. And he did; around the turn of the century. He went to nature and preached the gospel of eclecticism from the flowers. Shortly there came forth all the designs which the Greeks and Romans had tried and thrown out years before in favor of the items which went best and pleased the customers. It is not odd that "art nouveau's" grapevines and daisies and oak leaves died. The acanthus and the scallop and the ram's horn had been best sellers for two thousand years. They still are!

Suppose the brave designer says, "Out with all the clutter, *historic* and *botanic*. Let us design furniture for what it is: equipment to enable man to cope with life in a more relaxed and agreeable way. Let us [the designer is still talking] be as little children. Let us strip the sham and the plaster and the filigree from these things in our houses and look at them for what they are. What is a chair?"

"Why, something to sit on."

This is a little child talking, and making good sense, too; but back to the designer. "All right, let us make it to be well sat on, not just looked at and perched on."

In this frame of mind the designer looks at a chair with new eyes, and creates a chair which can be produced out of one piece of gas pipe (chromium plated) and two other simple units. It is light, strong, durable, and inexpensive.

What happens?

Well, most of the time Mrs. America, purchasing agent for the American Family, Inc.,

buys "Safe" Traditional! Because the designer, in his enthusiasm, forgets: one, that he is dealing with mice; two, that he is flouting generations and generations of mice, who have tried lots of novelties and finally settled on a very good cheese. Four legs on a chair are safe and dull, but a chair with four legs doesn't play tricks on you when you try to move it. Tubular furniture, now relegated to kitchen nooks, was brave and new world—but the back end came up and clipped you in the shin. That is, when you weren't standing on the back end of the runner and finding the chair oddly heavy! Tubular furniture and plastic china! What is it they remind you of? Could it be brass beds and celluloid collars? Why, yes, it could.

Does this mean modern Functional furniture is apt to be bad? Not at all. I think it is very good and gaining acceptance all the time. Mussolini once learned that even a dictator can't reform styles overnight. He tried it on Italian women's dress and had to give it up. In a matriarchy like America a reformer's chances are much less.

The sweeping reform days are over. The designers are beginning to admit that sterile, clean furniture is liked by the engineering mind, usually a male monopoly, but not necessarily by women or even all men.

Designs such as those selected to represent Functional in this book are ingenious, economical, sturdy, and beautiful. But even they could

stand less rugged insistence upon the virtues of pure function. A few weak sisters of the modern designing craft are flirting with that wolf eclecticism. Baroque is a capitulation to the acanthus leaf, minus much of the elegance of pure Functional. Someday other fond forms will slip in along with some of the well-loved materials that have been banished from the Functional designer's studio for so long. Like dark mahogany, for instance. It ought to be possible to have a few corny old favorites along with practical modern designs.

Meanwhile residents in this age can take pleasure in the imminent death of "streamlining," one of the greatest hoaxes ever imposed on the public. Its death rattle was heard when practical railroad men came out of their trance to discover that maintenance costs on locomotives covered with bizarre "shells" exceeded the savings achieved by infinitesimally greater speeds. Detroit should have been able to hear the cry when the Functional but not streamlined jeep was invented and everyone in the country said "I want one"! That was the voice of an America which had been smothered in Kromium Krap for years. Of course it is too much to expect a practical, simple car with head room and visibility and wheels you can get at for tire changing! But we may get a jeep to which a minimum of useless dreck has been added. That will be something! There will come a day when an electric iron (speed one

Eclecticism



mile per hour) and a pencil sharpener (stationary) will not be streamlined for speeds up to four hundred miles an hour, but be themselves again. This is the day which our better furniture designers have almost achieved.

'They'll get there faster if they listen to Mrs. America and be just a teeny weeny bit eclectic!

If you feel that a houseful of Functional furniture would seem like living in an airport building, try it in one or two rooms. If you have two homes, try it in the country where living is important and decoration is not. It does what it's designed for. It does put the emphasis on living. And it is beautiful. Like a racing boat.

211 ☞ Your excellent basic taste and sophistication, plus your choice of modern Functional furniture, places you in the category of creative people. You are a designer, an engineer, a professional man, an artist, or should be. It is less likely but probable that you are a writer, stylist, buyer, or merchant. You like Functional furniture because it has integrity and meaning and because it is not cobwebbed with the figures of the past. You like the synthetic adjuncts to it less well, and have used them less, feeling that objects of beauty do not need to "function." Your pictures are modern and I do not mean cubist. I believe you like the work of Julian Levi and Georgia O'Keeffe and Aaron Bohrod and Charles Burchfield and Rockwell Kent and Luigi Lucioni and Charles

Harsanyi and Yasuo Kuniyoshi—all American painters and all splendid. You leave Grant Wood and the early French Impressionists to the buyers of Safe furniture. I hope.

If you do not now have a large beautiful modern "machine for living" to put your dream furniture into, you will. For yours is a brave, imaginative, daring nature.

212 ☞ Honest and intelligent furniture men are inclined to deplore the paucity of worth-while adjuncts to Functional furniture. Impoverishment in this field is not surprising. Modern designers threw out every pleasant traditional trifle as unsuited to the new trend but neglected to provide appropriate substitutes. Small wonder that modern artists are eating quite well. All the thanks is not due to *Life's* inspired campaign for recognition of American artists. Modern rooms do not provide enough entertainment for the eye. Sculpture and paintings help to fill this need. This has not occurred to you. Your home is a little naked. Go get yourself a statue or a picture. You are otherwise impeccable.

213 ☞ Those formless patterns on the fabrics and the tubular hang-overs from the twenties are not precisely "of the moment." And we're getting back to wood these days. Back to good old basic wood and away from glass and plastics. You are still inclined to like



metal, plastics, glass. Yours is a dangerous choice. Your good basic taste leads you to like Functional things which are usually beautifully balanced in design. But your bad sophistication might lead you to buy outmoded or unpopular items. After all, the Morris chair was well planned, but its possession today would brand your home as a Major Hoople's boardinghouse! Ask the decorator, please. And if you give the decorator a *free hand* his natural desire to do a good job (which he can photograph) will guarantee you your money's worth.

221 ☞ You'll be all right. The planning these days starts with the manufacturers who have sensibly gotten together on pre-planned rooms and color schemes common to many objects. All you need to do is buy good things. Your high score in sophistication will insure that you do.

222 ☞ As noted above, discriminate buying is all you need. Your discrimination is only fair, but you can go less wrong with Functional than any other contemporary style and most antique styles. You probably picked some lush Baroque with your Functional. That's good. Oriental or Empire would be good, too, but only one of them, please.

223 ☞ Better go to a good decorator and let him take over.

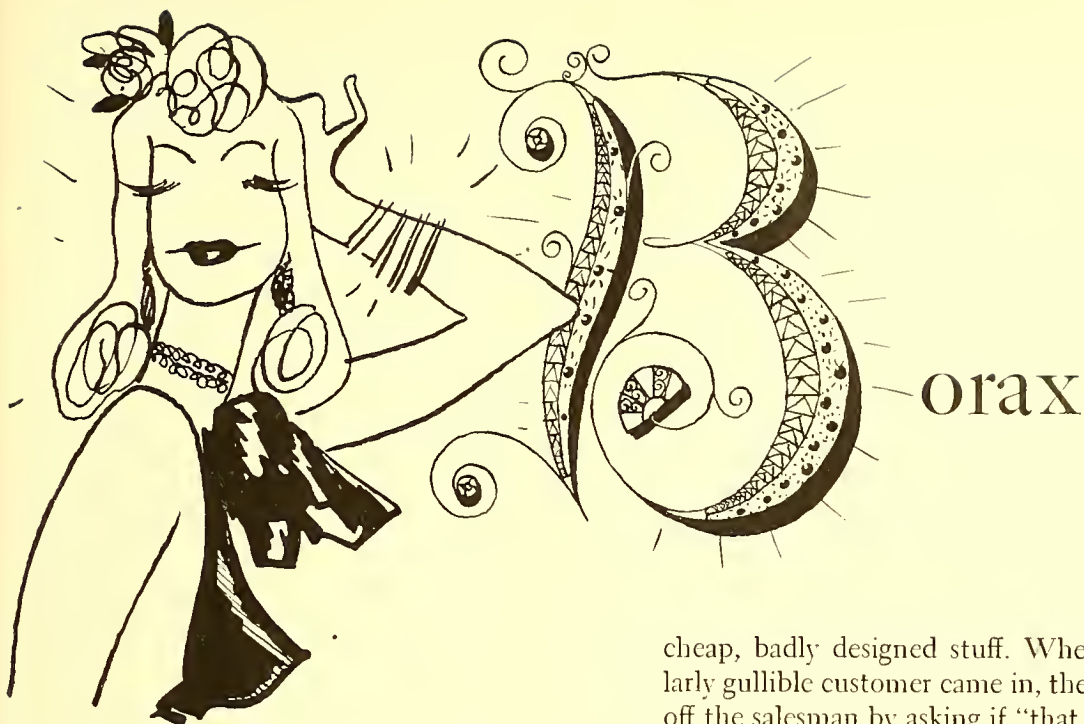
231 ☞ If you buy it all in one place, you can't miss. The planning is taken care of. Your sophistication is excellent; your basic taste bad.

232 ☞ Take down the World's Fair Trylon and Perisphere ornament. And see below.

233 ☞ Your place looks like a streamlined lunch wagon. A modern home really doesn't have to have neon lights in three colors. And that fireplace with the built-in goldfish bowls and the andirons that flash on and off! All right, so they are *tropical fish*, and it's really the imitation logs that are flashing! Do the logs have to be *chromium*?



The Functional fabric in Section Three was immediately derived from this Gauguin painting. Courtesy Modernage.



To the untutored eye no style of home furnishings shown in this book offers so much for the money expended. Expensive furniture is made of fine wood, mahogany, for instance. Or maybe walnut.

Look! This is made of mahogany and walnut! Burl mahogany—Circassian walnut. And that's not all. There is also curly maple, ebony, zebra wood! Not just one wood, like your ordinary furniture. No, sir! Not one, not two, not five or ten, but nineteen kinds of wood all inlaid together to make the eye pop. And workmanship! There are eight or nine *different* kinds of designs in just one piece! Furthermore, as a final touch of elegance, almost too much to believe, all the pieces in any one room match. Of course it is admitted that none of it lights up and throws out revolving beams of rich red, green, blue, and purple light like the juke box at Joe's Bar & Grill. But you can get that in a radio to match.

This is the furniture that got its nickname because cheap furniture used to be given away as premiums to collectors of tops from Borax boxes. Establishments which didn't always have fixed prices got to using the word as slang for

cheap, badly designed stuff. When a particularly gullible customer came in, the boss tipped off the salesman by asking if "that special shipment of Borax" had arrived. His manner implied that he knew he had a discriminating customer on his hands—one who wouldn't be put off with any ordinary stuff. And the Borax was sold.

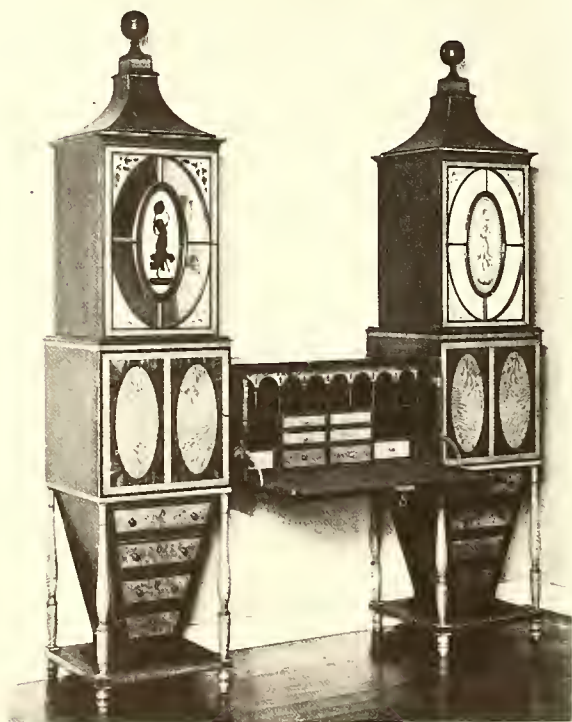
Since that time, of course, fixed prices have become the custom, and code signals to salesmen, if ever used, consist of other words.

Borax remains: the fanciest-looking merchandise that ever sold for half its apparent worth. What's the catch? There really isn't any. It is, as you can see, adequately put together; its nineteen varieties of wood are wood. They are admittedly a very thin veneer, but veneer has been used on the best of antique and modern furniture. The answer (not the catch) is production-line manufacturing methods and volume selling. Borax can be made cheaply because a large majority of the public can be depended on to want a lot of show for their money. They get it (and the minority has to take it) in automobiles carrying bushels of useless but mighty shiny chromium gimcracks. They get it in juke boxes, and they get it in home furnishings.

Nearly everything you buy has its advantages and disadvantages. Borax furniture looks like a lot for the money and it serves its purpose well enough. Anything against it? This:

Furniture and important accessories are seldom bought more than once in a lifetime. Borax is not always built well enough to last a lifetime and it's not designed well enough to last five years. Remember yesterday's kitchen chairs? They are not heirlooms now. And if any of them were made to last that long, they won't be for years. Those that still exist are in the homes of people who never grew out of their environment. You don't take cheap furniture with you on the way up. What is worse, it is quite possible that a background of cheap furniture is a deterrent to going up. Certain it is that good taste is usually present in the homes of those who make their mark in this world.

Any effort to discriminate between the homes of people who choose Borax is futile, but certain generalizations may be made.



As a begrudged concession to Borax fanciers it is hereby admitted that the most expensive of Borax sometimes survives the centuries. Sheraton writing desk, made to order (probably for an eccentric who designed it himself), in Baltimore back in the early 1800s. Courtesy American Art Association.

311, 321, 331 ☞ Regardless of your score in Section One, a good score in Section Two is implausible. You can't be sophisticated and like Borax. The only conclusions possible are as follows:

1. Your score in Section Two was the result of lucky guesses.
2. You were kidding when you picked Borax.

The latter conclusion is inescapable if your number is 311. (You're not fooling your wife, however, she knows you just don't want to buy new furniture! Better do it. She's right. You can't bring the boss home to dinner with the place looking like it does. Or entertain the heads of the county farm association!)

If you were only fair in sophistication your selection of Borax is possible but not probable:

312, 322, 332 ☞ If you were not kidding, you deserve to be told that you are living several notches below the average for America. Your home verges upon the ridiculous. With a limited sensitivity to basic rightness and very little knowledge of what is acceptable to discriminating people, you've assembled an indefinable jumble of commonplace objects. A junkman would give you \$25 per large van load, in normal times. The following advice may be helpful, especially if your score in Section Two was poor. (322 or 323.)

PAINT: Pay no attention to the suggested colors offered in free folders distributed by paint companies. They are all geared to your taste, which is the same as the taste of many other people and therefore not original. Why not just say bad? After all, you want to know.

Look at the colors. They are all nearly "pure" colors; that is, simple, primary, or secondary colors with white added. This is not fashionable. Is that bad? Maybe not; but we are not discussing goodness or badness but fashionableness. The paint companies aren't interested in any of those qualities, but in selling paint, and they know that the commonplace colors sell to commonplace people. Cream is commonplace. So is white with a little pure red added, to make pink. Or with blue added, to make light blue. These are the three most commonplace

colors there are. The paint companies can't show you hundreds of colors. They couldn't stock that many and make money. So they show you average colors which lots of people might want.

Mix your own. But keep them dirty. Remember that paint looks very much brighter when it gets on the wall. And dirty, dark colors are fashionable. Why? Because people are tired of light colors. The advantages from a practical standpoint are a standoff. Dark colors require the use of more electricity, light ones show more dirt.

FLOOR COVERING: For some years the more expensively decorated homes have not used patterned rugs, but plain carpet. The latter will be getting wide enough acceptance pretty soon to reach your set. Just about then the so-called smart set will realize that plain carpet is really impractical what with furniture marks and cigarette burns. They'll be buying figured carpet. Unless you're a slave to convention (and, mind you, I think you are) you might jump the gun. Stuff to get is that made for and sold to hotels. It's designed pretty well and reveals no damage short of a one-alarm fire.

WALLPAPER: You don't need much advice. The wallpaper companies these days are on their toes. They hardly sell a bad number. If you use wallpaper, watch out for the designs elsewhere in the room. Be sure they don't fight with the paper. If you paper and also want to

continue in your cautious way, use plain fabrics and small designs in the carpet and fabrics.

FURNITURE: Safest bet is Safe. Or Functional. Add good Chinese to the latter and American antiques to the former as you can afford it. Buy only utility things from mail-order companies unless you can go to their warehouse and see what you're buying. And don't buy then until you've memorized the designs of some of the better things.

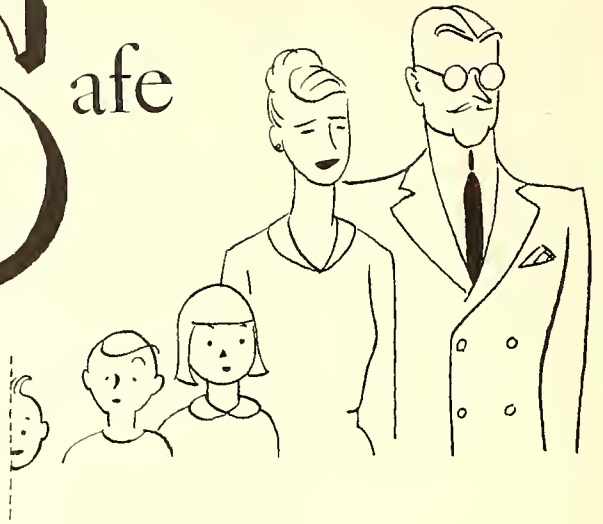
DRAPERIES don't have to come from a drapery department. Bed ticking and dyed tablecloth by the yard, or even checkcloth can be used. There's no law! The most boring thing in a boring home is usually the curtains, which say: "Don't look at me; I'm just an average standard piece of curtain stuff!"

FIX-IT-UP DEPARTMENT: Subscribe to a homemaking magazine. Thousands of novel and pleasant ideas for giving old furniture a new twist exist in such papers. A saw, hammer, nails, and some paint are the necessary tools.

If you were bad in sophistication, there's little hope:

313, 323, 333 ☞ You're the one who buys the psuedo-silk sofa cushion covers with American flags, roses, and poems "to dearest mother" printed luridly upon them. And the novelty lamps contrived out of bisque mermaids and embarrassed seashells. Shame on you! Your tattooing is showing!

Safe



Sixty per cent of all the furniture sold in the United States is Safe; that is, based upon Early American adaptations of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century English designs. Hepplewhite, a good safe in-between in both time and style, seems to have the edge over Chippendale and Sheraton, and American Empire, usually called Federal or Duncan Phyfe, is very popular. The wood is mahogany.

Perhaps "White-Collar" furniture would be a better term for it than Safe, since it has all the connotations of substantial mediocrity that the phrase implies.

At its best, and most expensive, it is a seemly companion to Patrician. Its owner has probably made the Rotary and country club. These triumphs were undoubtedly accompanied by the disposal of the pretentious Studebaker sedan and the acquisition of a plain station wagon.

At its worst, its character is lost in a welter of unidentifiable styles only vaguely, or not at all, reminiscent of its origins. And its owners drive a battered old Pontiac to the weekly pinochle session at the Friendly Five Club.

This is the standard uniform of the great American living room. If I seem to sneer at it, I apologize, because it's much better than any other uniform in any other country. It is, however, a uniform cravenly affected by sixty out of a hundred furniture buyers because they are afraid, like the newly discovered teen-age group, to be different by so much as one bobby sock.

If this book serves any further purpose than that of casual entertainment, it is hoped that it will be to help awaken Americans to the value

and charm of an interesting and individual home background. Considering the fact that the twelve styles shown are but a sampling of those available, it seems a pity that just one should be widely favored.

American women are conceded to be the best-dressed and most beautiful in the world, but the Oscar for individual distinction goes to the French! The American home is undoubtedly the most expensively furnished home in the world. Is it also the most distinctive?

411 ☞ When a person has taste as excellent as yours he is secure against criticism. "Temperance in all things" and "Be not the first by whom the new are tried, nor yet the last to lay the old aside" express a point of view which cannot be challenged by cynical dilettantes. A safe middle course is always good taste—in neckwear, personal habits, and certainly in embellishing the home. This course you have carried to such a degree of perfection as to have earned you the distinction of having the "most admired home." Such a conclusion is inescapable if you consider that you have the best score in a group of people comprising over half of all furniture buyers. That it looks like a showroom in Marshall Field's or Macy's or Sloans' is a credit to your ability to compete on unequal terms with some of the best decorators in the country.

412 ☞ The march of style goes on, bringing new colors into fashion and dimming the luster of such one-time favorites as mulberry and rust. You still find them beautiful and so do I. You are a member of the solid-color rug group. You have a few antique adjuncts to your decor—an old lamp, a Sandwich glass pin tray, a Victorian vase. You are fond of our excellent American chintzes and use them well (if a bit obviously: mulberry, green, white, and rose chintz with mulberry carpet). Your pictures are the same excellent reproductions one sees in many other better-class homes. They were procured at an outlay which would have bought you at least one third as many pretty good original paintings. You don't believe this because, like millions of other Americans, you've been afraid to look into the cost of original art. For how would you know it was good if it wasn't selected for you by a print manufacturer? Good, that is, in the usual American sense of being safely acceptable to the bridge club. Note: *it* probably wouldn't be; but if you liked it enough to buy it you'd be taking an important step toward individuality. When the other members of the bridge club each bought a picture by the same painter, you could get another picture by *another* painter. I'll be glad to suggest several. Simply send a stamped and self-addressed copy of any Winslow Homer, or Picasso's "Woman in White."

413 ☞ I'd like to lecture you about your pictures, too, but you can read the preceding paragraph. In the last sentence, substitute "any Maxfield Parrish" for "any Winslow Homer" and a color photo of Lake Louise for the Picasso. Now let us take up the subject of knickknacks, on which I must be very severe. They are the worst things you own if your home is in line with your taste. With the money you have thrown away on supposedly adorable little pottery donkeys and whimsical glass horrors and cactus-bearing monstrosities, you could repaper the blue bedroom. Or paint the dark chestnut trim and doors in all the rooms. Or buy a new chair, or your first coffee table. Try putting a dollar away every time you

come out of a tearoom or gift shoppe without a nasty little gimcrack. For most Americans of your degree of taste, this requires enough resolution to permanently sober two and one half alcoholics!

421 ☞ Like the three preceding subjects you like flowers in the home. Your vases are better than those of the last two, but your arrangements are worse than any of the three. Translated in terms of most problems in home decoration, this general pattern would hold good. Excellent things—less ability to display them well. An exception is your use of color. You are aware of the most fashionable shades and use them often. Maybe a bit too often—especially in some places where several come together and add up to more fashion than is easily accepted by the eye!

422 ☞ If it's true that "the voice of the people is the voice of God," you've selected



The ideal Safe chair. Sort of Sheraton. Leather covered. Fits any room. Well made. Macy's used to have it. Maybe you'd be lucky.

God-given things because more Safe furniture is sold than any other type shown in this book. But the fact that you came out "fair" in both basic taste and sophistication does not imply God-given taste at all but just average or mediocre taste. Thus we have arrived at an apparent paradox: a person with mediocre taste selecting God-given furniture! Something must be wrong. Do you suppose that the voice of the people really isn't the voice of God? This is an interesting idea—with profound overtones. If the idea is true, as some critics, including this one, believe, then popular opinion could be wrong about important things—like presidents, for instance! This is a pretty frightening thought. How did it get in here anyway?

423 ☞ You can't be kidding because you got a "Fair" in the first department. You must have tried. Or did you try to miss them all and win the "fair" by mistake? In any case, you find yourself in one of the lowest categories in this book.

Shall I describe your living room? No? Well, this is what it is like. The floor is covered with linoleum which has transgressed a cardinal rule of good taste by trying to be something which it is not—in this case, a figured carpet. If you have a real carpet, it is beige or taupe or henna with a pretty bad design placed archly in one corner. Your nondescript sofa is covered with a sort of coarse cloth, colored, like as not, "henna" or "rust." There is a "Cogswell" chair for Papa with an attendant bridge lamp. It needs a new cord. Your ash trays are chromium with sailing ships, or orange glass, or stamped aluminum. There is at least one allegedly comic pottery animal. If more, one has a snake plant growing out of its back. Side chairs are Windsors with partly cane seats. They need replacing. The walls are painted cream or a light tan. At the windows are curtains made of a split length of light blue or faded pink brocatelle and edged with tarnished gold fringe. They are not lined

and a little too short. Pictures, if any, show an Indian on a cliff, a waterfall in the Canadian Rockies, a repulsively cozy home (with hollyhocks) at the turn of a country road at dusk, or Grandpa as large as life and twice as terrifying. The frames are gilt or old gold and fancy. If there is a fireplace, you have hung a sleazy machine-made tapestry or a three-part mirror over it.

I do not tell you this out of malice. I have been received hospitably in such homes and been fond of their owners. Taste is not everything. But you did ask for it. And I'm trying to give you your money's worth.

431 ☞ See 421 and 423 for appraisals which could apply to you. If this seems like broadening the target unfairly so the author can't miss, please remember that Safe furniture itself has a greater spread in quantity and style and price than any other. It is made for all purses in large amounts and many designs. What you have is probably fairly good, and when you get more it will be better. Chances are 60 to 40 that you are a man with a wife whose taste is better than yours in matters of planning, if not necessarily in purchasing.

432 ☞ You're in the bracket where a homemaking magazine would help. The things you know are bad should be given away to the party in the next paragraph or to the Salvation Army. That will give you room in which to attack the rest of the items with paint and *découpage* (see page 67 of *Mechanix Illustrated* for November 1945) and saws and imagination. Subscribe to the *American Home*, *Architectural Forum*, *House and Garden*, *Antiques Magazine*, *Good Housekeeping*, the *Ladies' Home Journal*. For a starter!

433 ☞ You're going to get some presents. See above. Now you can open that junk shop! And don't think there won't be plenty of people with much worse taste than yours to snatch anything you have, at high prices!



Out of America's rustic past, by way of Grand Rapids, comes a pleasant manner of doing a small house which well deserves the name Homey. When not made of birch the trade calls it "rock maple"—a term probably intended to convey the implication of sterling worth and solid durability. These qualities it has, plus a fair degree of the mellow friendliness for which country-made antiques are cherished. Plain, but more expensive than Borax, it is passed up by many families whose rooms would benefit by its honesty. It is used most often in unpretentious homes and country lodges, but people with plenty of money to indulge excellent taste do not hesitate to use it in game rooms and solariums. The best of the Homey has really classic lines and would blend very well with Safe, or even Patrician if made of mahogany. The worst employs obvious devices to make sure that no one can possibly overlook the fact that it is supposed to be quaint. Moderation in all things applies to buyers and designers who like oversize knobs and appliquéd Indian heads on furniture which is easily seen to be rustic without them.

511 ☞ You are an out-of-doors type with sophistication and more than normal intelligence. You live in a relatively small town and

are between thirty and forty years of age. I'll gladly risk being wrong once out of ten by saying that you are one of the more important professional families in your town. Dentist, doctor, factory manager, is specific enough. Schoolteacher, maybe; or banker. And you could be a yachting enthusiast. In any case, your home is as charming as any within the county; but not nearly so pretentious as some.

You may have thought of this idea if you are a yachtsman. If you haven't, or if you're a landlubber, it may be a valuable suggestion: Homey furniture bears a remarkable resemblance to the kind of interior woodwork produced by the best ship's carpenters. It's built of native hardwood. It has rounded corners. All it needs to be perfect for you is two coats of waterproof varnish flowed on and left shiny, plus added brass hardware and blue leatherette. Use the latter where they'll do the most good: the brass (highly polished) as drawer pulls, ash trays, et cetera,—the leatherette (or real leather if you can manage) as a replacement for the original upholstery. Take my word for it, you will have a unique effect: sparkling, clear, shipshape, and homey!

512 ☞ You won't like the suggestion offered in the last paragraph. Otherwise, the whole thing applies pretty closely to you!

513 ☞ You'll have some very, very corny accessories in your home and quite a few in-

congruous holdovers from a previous era in American furniture design. And I'm very much afraid that there's figured linoleum on the floor. Or at best a rug with a design in one corner only. Your curtains are too fancy for the furniture. And your taste in pictures is a little unfortunate. Remember the badly drawn burnt-wood pictures and the leather pillows with the fringe? And the bead curtains? Watch out. That's the category your house will be in in five or ten years from now even if it seems up to date this year.

521 ☞ You'll do pretty well in this world because you're smart and you're practical. You're not artistic, but I predict you'll eventually live in a far more attractive place than



This Windsor chair, despite its unorthodox feet, is as well designed as most old ones. It's good Homey.

you're in now. All things considered, you've chosen well. Five years from now your Homey things will be excellent for a rumpus room, maid's room, or nursery.

522 ☞ Your living room is the essence of solid, middle-class small-town America.

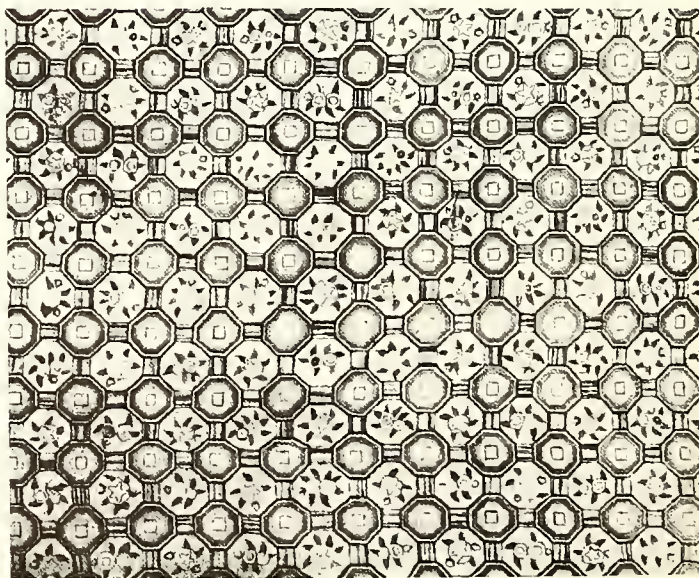
523 ☞ See above. But read fairly solid, lower middle class, and very small town.

531 ☞ You have a good chance to get ahead but a fairly poor chance of improving your taste. You make the practical decisions, let someone else buy the furniture next time. For this time you were probably well advised. You have good value for your money.

532 ☞ You have commonplace but not excessively vulgar taste.

533 ☞ You have commonplace but not quite vulgar taste.

*Hooked rug. Genuine antique.
Genuine reproduction recommended.*



Baroque



If reports from returning writers are not too exaggerated, *Little Women* narrowly failed of production because the executives thought they had a side-show scenario on their hands. Literacy and business acumen do not always go hand in hand as many disillusioned writers have learned. What the smart executives wanted was a period piece. The period should be Victorian.

Criticising the movie executives further will get us nowhere. Let us say, simply, that *Little Women* was produced. Other Victorian period pieces naturally followed in rapid succession. It was not necessary to call them *Little Men*, *Little Women's Other Husbands*, *The Return of the Little Women*, or *Little Women and Their Lovers* to ensure their success, because the public was in a mood for rich, beautiful interior shots. Whether this was because Victorian decorators had been dusting the period off for public consumption or whether public demand pushed such decorators to the fore cannot be determined. Did Hitler rouse the Germans or did the Germans raise Hitler? The best answer is a shrug of the shoulders.

The answer to Hollywood Victorian was less noncommittal. A public which had been as anonymous as Sinatra girls during the News Reel, took one gander at Pastel Rococo and identified itself by swooning. In New York, hurried trips to Third Avenue were followed by a frenzied accumulation of pastel silk (with buttons to match), white paint, and gold fringe. The acanthus leaf, served up in every form except salad for three thousand years, was brought on for the fourth time in three hundred.

Hollywood Lush Baroque is modern with the frills reinstated. Or it might be called Blond Victorian. It can definitely be called the answer to the modern Pompadour's prayer. (For yesterday's answer see Monarchial; 911 to 933.)

611 ☞ Your home will reflect the taste of a very beautiful and very expensive woman. It will reflect her, too, in numbers of mirrors.

It will be a very luxurious home, but it will stop short of being an extravaganza because the woman is not just beautiful. She is also smart. She knows that a husband or prospective husband can be subtly provoked by a bedroom swathed in pastel silk. And that they can be just plain provoked if the festoons drool out into the living room. So the living room makes concessions. Leave us enter it. You will note that the male is not asked to descend a sixteen-step staircase to make his entrance. A conservative six steps will do. The carpet he walks on is not white, but oyster. And it is not a vulgar ankle-depth type but has a mere three inches of cut pile. You see? He's going to be *relaxed* and at *home*. Especially when he sinks into that practically *indestructible* swooping settee covered in mauve silk. When he gets his feet comfortably up on the top of the mirrored coffee table, and lights his old bruyère on a match (after three goes at a stunning cigarette lighter), he's going to smile gratefully up at you and say "Egad, this is cozy."



In these photos from Modernage (above, left) and Macy's (center and below) you will see elements Baroque and Functional used in the same room settings. The chair looks only slightly out of place.

612 ☞ Our man of the last analysis will have to walk down only two steps. He'll get to sit in a fat overstuffed slipper chair without arms, and put his feet up on a light gray hassock. The place is still enormously comfy what with the curtains spilling out three feet at the bottom and the great big three-inch ash trays of white and gold china.

613 ☞ Lucite and plexiglass and ostrich-feather bouquets are favorites with the heroine who did this well in her homework. Shadow boxes full of junk hang on the walls. Pink and silver replace oyster and gold.

621 ☞ Read 611 but mess the place up a bit. This could be effected by leaving a candy box containing a lot of crinkly brown papers and two rum center bonbons in a chair. Drape stockings over the shower rod and crack the washbasin.

622 ☞ You're a cute kid and you're in there fighting. You heard white is good and you like those swoops on the rail of the tufted headboards. Those swoops, dearie, are Hollywood's version of the Victorian version of the Louis XV version of the ancient Greek acanthus leaf. A-c-a-n-t-h-u-s. Not a-c-a-n-t-u-s.

623 ☞ You have a dangerous preference. Bad taste plus a desire for the luxurious can produce some very cheap-looking results. Hollywood Lush is best when used to relieve the straight lines and simple surfaces which predominate in Functional furniture. I suggest that you consider this method of using it to avoid that "Laocoön look."

Start by deciding on a color plan. Light modern furniture permits rich browns which would smother mahogany, in carpets or on walls. If there's a man in your life, brown, coupled with a very light blue-green, will please him. Many people with your kind of taste try to achieve a completely whitewashed look. They buy pickled pine, walnut, or oak, and use light grays tinged variously with blue or pink or salmon for accessories. A common custom is to carry these almost whites through

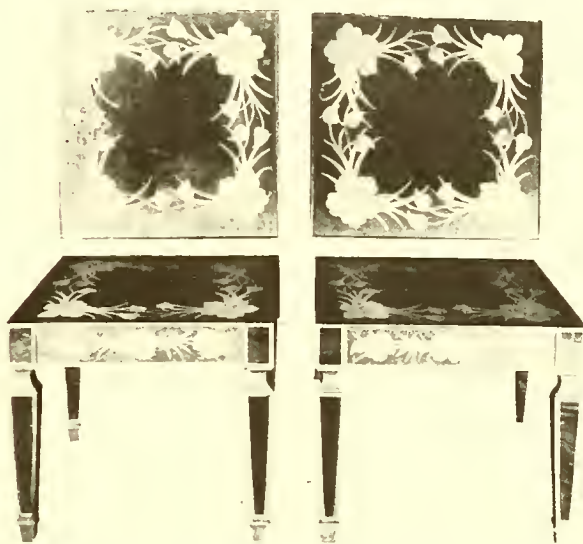
to the walls and carpets, but dark neutral tones such as putty are becoming very popular. Watch out for "swoops" everywhere. Try a swooping mirror above a plain table. Swooping wallpaper or carpet calls for mostly plain furniture.

Above all, avoid cheap items and clutter. You should put all your eggs into very few baskets. If you haven't many eggs, save by buying only a few good things and you'll automatically achieve that smart "bare" look. And the less things you put into a room, the more you can indulge your love of the fancy in each item.

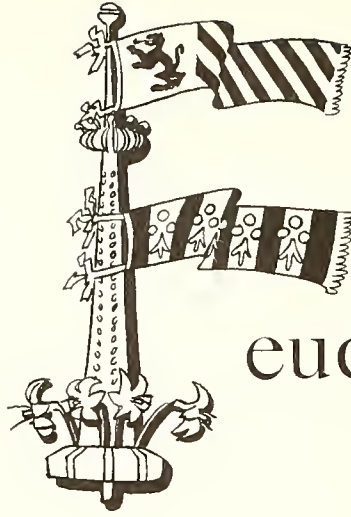
631 ☞ You will not buy cheap items, but I doubt if you can produce a pleasant and unified room unaided. Read the next to the last paragraph in the preceding analysis.

632 ☞ It's going to be very bad if you try to salvage anything you have when you renovate. You're dealing with a style which is over your head.

633 ☞ Don't think of it without a decorator to help.



Ruder (385 Madison Avenue—a nice outfit) sell these decorated plate-glass twin coffee tables. "Background" [I quote] "is both silver and gold leaf."



eudal

When Hearst's vast agglomeration of medi-
eval and Renaissance objects went on sale at
Gimbel's, people said it was the death knell of
Feudal. This was not strictly accurate. It was
more like an exhumation and transfer of the
body. For Feudal had ceased to exist as a style
since the end of prohibition, when people
came up out of cellars. It was undoubtedly a
coincidence that two such unrelated yet simi-
lar things as a law and a décor were repealed
at the same time. Or it may have been a
general inclination to return to sanity. But it
is worth noting that the Palm Beach style of
decorating, developed in 1918, set the stage
for the speak-easy cra. Before that time
wealthy connoisseurs had forced themselves
into the furniture of a period noted for its lack
of comfort and refinement. But not until then
did *all* the manifestations of the Dark Ages
engulf the common people in gloom, dis-
comfort, and lawlessness. Then the day of
François Villon returned, complete with
cloak, dagger, and furniture to match. The
town's wits sat in low taverns cheek by jowl
with powerful outlaws. Robin Hoods and rob-
bery and Robert Benchley rubbed elbows in
"Tony's" and "Jimmie's," surrounded by genu-
ine cobwebs and phony ironwork.

The march of civilization became a dis-
orderly retreat, its camping places defiled by an
insane love of the corny, the phony, the beat-
up. Smooth walls were laboriously roughened.
Coarse cloth replaced silk. Even the art of the
silversmith, brought to a high degree of per-
fection during the past millennium, suffered a
severe setback. It, too, succumbed to the mad-
ness and produced "hammered" silver. Not
just hammered silver, you understand, but the
ultimate folly, *imitation* hammered silver.

Like a man exhausted by a fit, the industry
has lain quiescent for some time, content to
produce flat silver from molds up to fifty years
old. Such new styles as have been developed
show signs of going back to even earlier
sources than the Dark Ages for inspiration, be-
ing apparently based upon the designs of the
Bronze Age.

And the furniture industry has never been
quite the same, having rediscovered walnut
during the great retrogression! Certain types
of manufacturing have never gotten over this
but will when the American black walnut, a
slow-growing tree, has been exterminated.

By now you will have detected a note of
prejudice against Feudal. The prejudice is
really against the excesses and grotesqueries of
its imitators and adapters. Early Italian,
French, Spanish, and English artisans built
well and beautifully. This is especially true if
due consideration is given to the uses to which

their furniture was put and the type of dwelling it enriched. The fine Medieval and Renaissance objects which have survived were used in castles and palaces. They were large and ornate because rooms were huge and bare. The accessory colors were intense, even gaudy and raw because glass was rare and the rooms were dark. Broad effects and coarse finishes were used on many things which could not be viewed closely because of the height at which they were placed. Feudal is not in scale with modern living. That is, unless you live in a modern castle or in a large Spanish type of home.

711 ☞ If you live in a castle or a villa, you can afford a competent, modern decorator to advise you and need no comment from me. What do you do with all those big rooms?

712 ☞ Like all aficionados of Feudal who have better-than-average taste you are aware of the fact that the best substitute for the space it needs is white (or very light) paint. And you have displayed your fine carved wood to its best advantage against simple white walls, innocent of hammy plaster effects. Since good taste encompasses exteriors as well as interiors, you are probably living in Florida or the Southwest where a Spanish house is at home and in seemly surroundings, or in one of two other possibilities. Both of these, once representing the height of fashion, are now considered anachronisms. You are aware of this opinion and are unperturbed because you are also aware of the fact that today's anachronism is tomorrow's hallowed old landmark. With your taste, then, you live in a Spanish villa, a Renaissance town house, or a secluded Elizabethan replica not too far from the city. Sit tight, the servant problem has got to get better sometime.

713 ☞ The traditionally correct handling of a Feudal interior has you in its grip. For to-

day's taste, which runs to adequate display of fine furniture rather than slavish fidelity to history, you have too much plaster and polychrome. Too many gaudy brocatelles and velvets in red and green are not so favored as one or two splashes of red or green against white.

721 ☞ In comparison to the person of the preceding analysis you are apt to have less good furniture handled in a better or at least more contemporary style. Your home is pretty definitely Spanish in architecture and of the genuine or "post-Cecil-B.-DeMille" sort. *Saludo muchacho!*

722 ☞ One *bonheur-du-jour* will get you a nicked marble mantel if you are not still perpetuating wall colors popular in the twenties. Have you any old-apartment-hall-tan about the house? Any pumpkin yellow with red? Like a Shell filling station? Any dull rose? Your taste has atrophied. You haven't changed an idea or a knickknack for years. My, how the dust is gathering. And the moths are into the gross point!

723 ☞ There are very few things as passé as ersatz wrought-iron curtain hangers. You like 'em! Shame on you.

731 ☞ You live in the old Hollywood. Well, all right—mentally then! What should happen to you is your house should be covered with pink stucco. I'll bet it is too.

Or pumpkin yellow, if you think that's better.

732 ☞ Must I be rude to you just because you bought this book? Please take it back and try to get your money for it. I like your home! Do you understand? Like it!

733 ☞ With you I don't mind so much. Your place gives me the creeps.



It is possible to write a whole book of sneering jibes at collectors of antiques. The method is simple. One mentions as many different periods and modes as possible—associating with each one the more ludicrous, banal, criminal, ostentatious, degenerate, intemperate, or crude aspects of the period when each was developed. Relics which stood the test of time least well are condemned as typical monuments to the era which produced them. But it is doubtful if antiques and fine old designs can be disposed of as if they were dragons going up in smoke at the pronouncement of magic words by the Young Prince, even if the Young Prince stamps his foot!

"Modern" (i.e., contemporary) designers and ignorant yokels have each employed laughter against fine but old things many times before, but fine old things continue to be preserved.

The frustrated and the ignorant laughter may be ignored. The oft-repeated and relatively honest accusation that antique collectors are *nouveau-riche* snobs and humbugs is harder to take and not so easily laughed off. For it is probably true that many collectors of antiques are less concerned with beauty than with the air of long-established gentility imparted by apparent heirlooms. Fortunately, this is less true now than it was at the close of the last century when huge fortunes and col-

lections were being amassed by very coarse and undeserving characters. I am convinced that today's collectors are true collectors, imbued by no impulse baser than a mild avarice.

There have always been collectors and there have always been those who thought them silly, but logic is on the side of collectors.

They have the advantage of "open stock." As long as there are estates to be disposed of, the possibility of adding a needed piece is guaranteed.

When they buy furniture, they are also making an investment. Contemporary furniture becomes merely secondhand the day it is delivered. Liquidating it is a painful and eye-opening experience. Five cents on the dollar may be a good return on new furniture, when the time comes to dispose of it. America's nomadic, rootless existence thus contributes heavily to the demand for furniture with a tangible resale value.

Collectors have the advantage of flexibility. Starting with crude country-made pieces, an impecunious collector may gradually introduce more refined items without also introducing a discordant note.

They have the privilege of contributing to the beauty of the objects they acquire. They can sandpaper and pumice and shellac and tinker. This is a joy which few collectors deny themselves, especially when young, enthusiastic, and poverty-stricken.

Another valuable advantage is individuality.

One's rooms are not likely to be duplicated by one's neighbor if they are furnished in antiques. People who have searched for one chair to complete a set will attest to this fact!

Most important, discriminating, and far-sighted people are able to avoid tomorrow's outmoded horror by not buying today's sensation. This is an important argument in the minds of collectors old enough to remember the rages which have died. Art nouveau, Mission, and Modern (spelled with an "e" by its detractors) are the Alamo rallying cries of those who were once courageous but never will be again. Silly part of this is that all of these styles will be ardently collected antiques fifty to one hundred years from now! Or maybe only ten years from now!

The curse of the deserving modern designer is that time keeps marching faster and faster. His designs these days are scarcely in the factory before new designs have supplanted them. Time was when Chippendale held forth for fifty years. Hepplewhite lasted about twenty, Sheraton only fifteen. Ours is a frantic age when a designer is lucky if he has time to hit the jack pot before the place is pinched! Can a collector be blamed for being a collector?

Especially when knowledge pays off better than taste? And it does, too, in a way! It takes discrimination to pick good modern furniture; knowledge of authenticity is sufficient for an antiquarian. This is because (as discussed under Mellow) the antiques still extant must be presumed to have been the best built and most attractively designed. If they hadn't been, they'd have collapsed or have been chopped up by now!

And now, if you're ashamed of yourself for having picked the easy way out, you may turn to Functional and decide to be brave and new world! If not, you may take pride in having elected as your choice the designer conceded by most experts to be the opposite number to Rembrandt. The period selected to represent Patrician is the one in which Chippendale dominated the scene.

If you like it you'll want to know all about Hepplewhite and Sheraton. These two de-

signers may be lumped with Chippendale in the Georgian category, but your taste indicates that you'd like Queen Anne and also the period which followed Georgian. It is called Biedermeier, Empire, Regency, or Federal, depending on whether it was produced in Germany, France, England, or America. (See Empire.) There was a French counterpart to Georgian too. Look into all of them before you settle. Most of them blend well but you might want to keep your room pure.

811 ☞ You and 211 and 1011 are the people with whom the author chooses to be cast away in Paris, or London, or New York. You didn't need to go through all this effort to be told what your taste is. Unless you have a deep-seated inferiority complex you are a very happy and very charming person. You know all the answers. It is easy to visualize you in your town house done in faultless Georgian or your country place in very Early American. If you don't see yourself in these surroundings at present, just relax; you will. You are mature and mellow like the patina on the objects you have surrounded yourself with. Depending on your sex, you resemble the men in the whisky advertisements or the ladies who were immortalized by Gainsborough. You inherited your taste but probably made its indulgence possible by your own efforts. Or, just possibly, you inherited your money. In that case, you deserve even more credit for developing such good taste. *Nos félicitations!*

812 ☞ Read the paragraph above for a pretty accurate appraisal of your taste. But take off a few demerits for a certain slightly unfortunate juxtaposition of periods. This will not necessarily take the form of two or three Early American styles in one room (more and more acceptable), but a tendency to place Victorian objects on a Chippendale table. You're pretty apt to favor Oriental rugs. You haven't yet adopted the surprisingly modern colors of old Williamsburg. The furniture you own is remarkably good, but discriminating moderns might feel a slight fustiness about your wallpaper.

813 ☞ There's not much use in raising a warning finger at you. And I don't wish to. But you've come this far so you must be interested in your taste standing even though you'll probably do nothing about it. I don't think I would either, if I were in your position. You own lovely American antiques. They are a great source of joy to you—a joy which would not be enlarged by giving them what today's dictum regards as the most effective background. If you can keep the mold out of their present background for a few more years, it may become an antique itself! I refer to all the non-antique adjuncts to the general décor—the red brick and unsmart fireplace which draws so well; the non-colonial staircase or the obsolete but by-no-means-antique side lights on the wall. These things date you as an early collector of Americana who is still early.

821 ☞ You couldn't have chosen furniture more intelligently, considering your poor basic taste and excellent sense of awareness. Your interest in decorative matters will help to make you an expert in about three books and a dozen trips to a reliable dealer. Or almost an expert. You'll probably be inclined to mix Federal with Georgian and can be trusted to do it discreetly. And I think you'll fill out the collection with Safe of the better sort. You don't need advice on the things to buy, but you will do well to study the arrangement of the items carefully. You will be apt to choose excellent wallpapers and put them in the wrong rooms. Caution: you're clever, but not instinctively right.

822 ☞ It's likely that you chose many objects of the Mellow school of thought. And as a probable corollary, your home is something of a hodgepodge. This is not a thing which should disturb you. Probably 999 out of 1,000 homes in America are. Yours is still 'way above average because you have a few lovely things which stand out and steal the scene. There's enough interest in a home like yours to offset quite a bit of confusion.

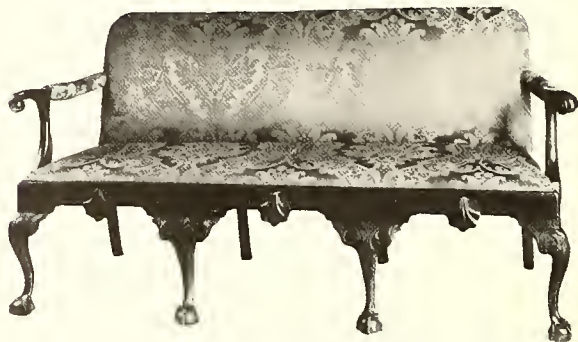
823 ☞ Your rooms are almost the ultimate

in cluttered incongruity. But there's a great deal of charm in an antique shop! Try to avoid buying modern things at all. You'll do some pretty sad things to your classic pieces if you do. I wouldn't go so far as to say there's a Kewpie doll on your mantel, but some of your picture frames hold mighty bad reproductions.

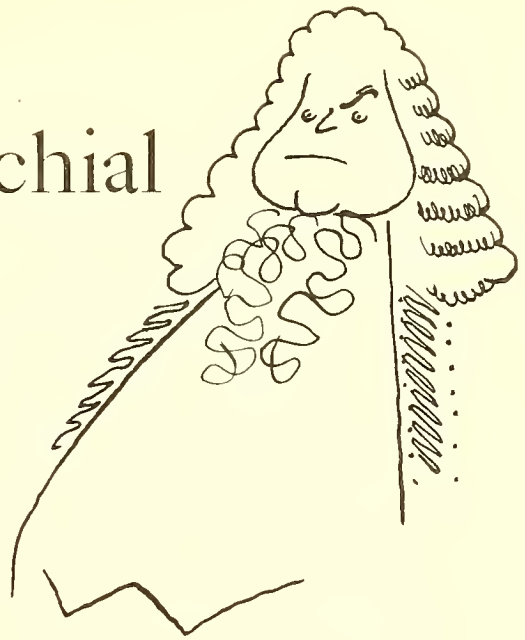
831 ☞ Your bad basic decisions will be no great handicap to you since your field, antiques, is one in which knowledge pays off as well as taste. You'll be successful at decorating if you take full advantage of your sophistication and your inclination to great, classic furniture. A tendency you must guard against, however, will be toward overdoing your room. Watch out for too many cretonnes, elaborate curtains, and fancy wallpapers. You'll have good ones but they may not be too happy with each other.

832 ☞ Any attempt to pass judgment upon the skill with which you'd do a room is heavily dependent upon how consistently you picked your furniture. If you chose Patrician at least eight times and selected very few varying forms, you'll hardly go wrong. The preceding analysis applies, in the main, to you.

833 ☞ Main thing for you to do is make sure you know your antiques and their accessories. That's the last and best resort for people who have very little natural taste.



This rather ugly sofa is the one which should logically have been used as the Patrician sofa. Personal prejudice won out over logic. Your forgiveness, please?



Regardless of present-day prejudices, careful students of French furniture design must admit that it represents the utmost in luxury, extravagance, super-sophistication, and artistic elaboration. Every worth-while curve which still exists in the best of today's traditional furniture may be found in its most refined form in that of the Louis XV period. Chippendale himself derived heavily from French stylists and could do nothing more than select and simplify their overopulent designs. That Chippendale (and Hepplewhite and Sheraton) was preferred in England is less a tribute to his skill than a statement of the relatively ascetic and male character of the Anglo-Saxon. In Colonial America, further simplifications indicate a culture once more removed from the original French, and possibly that much more virile. The essential grace remains, stripped of the gilt and the hand decorations.

Monarchial is the ultimate expression of the taste of a spoiled, extravagant, rich, and cultured kept woman, such as Pompadour. It is not remarkable that disrespectful persons with a distaste for the sham, the useless, and the wasteful, call it "keptive furniture."

At its best, Monarchial is usually the choice of a cultured woman. At its worst, it reflects the sort of situation where Papa, flush with dough (not money), and not knowing a Louis from a pfui says, "Look Mamma, what it costs I don't care; the place should look classy."

The relative disrepute into which Monarchial has fallen may be an evidence of the pro-

letarian reform or it may be a revolt against women, but it is probably the solid and essentially Anglo-Saxon core of the American character speaking. And the fact is that Monarchial is found chiefly in two kinds of homes: the most refined and the most vulgarly ostentatious. Traditional furniture derived from "Monarchial" sources is almost always abysmally bad. This cannot be said of furniture copied from English forms. The latter pervades the entire American scene and is usually pretty good.

There was a time, not twenty-five years ago, when the full-blown French was considered almost the only thing possible in a salon (parlor to me). Today it is not popular. I consider this a little unfortunate because it is very beautiful. A happy compromise which seems less offensive to the rugged American of today is French Provincial—the Monarchial counterpart of our Mellow. Harder to get than the latter, more expensive, and much less easily handled by a person lacking in *soigné*, it has never become one of the best-known American decorative manners. But it has great charm and a pleasant blend of grace and honesty.

Lovers of Monarchial may follow their inclination from chaste through opulent to chaste by referring to this list:

Provincial, graceful but down-to-earth and simple.

Louis XIV, expensive, forthright, and heavy.

Louis XV, expensive and flossy as hell.

Louis XVI, classic and more refined.

911 ☞ Your living room is gracious, feminine, lovely. It is a composite of the milder, purer forms of Louis XIV (some of the walls are paneled oak or walnut) and the simpler varieties of Louis XV furniture. *Chinoiserie*s rather than *singerie*s please you, and well-chosen Chinese objects speak well of Pompadour's financial and cultural interests in the Orient. Soft grays ranging from putty to oyster are much in evidence, and delicate greens and arquoise. Some Chinese wallpaper may be present. Soft Aubusson covers the floor. Pictures are few but excellent, tending to blend delicately with the décor. They are mostly modern in old frames. Marie Laurencin, Raoul Dufy, and Utrillo are probably represented. No Gauguin or Van Gogh. Your taste will be ac-

The modern Monarchial reproduction in the lush manner (near-Borax), versus the modern Provincial reproduction. Both came from the same store which would rather sell you the Provincial. (I hope.)

corded honor as long as the Trianon exists as an inspiration to the ultimate in grace.

If you are a man you have chosen Louis XIV, or, more probably, Provincial.

912 ☞ Some of the things you chose when you planned your home have fallen into disfavor more rapidly than others. There's little you can do about the parquet floor, except cover it. You might use a fabric less historically accurate when you recover the furniture. Brocades, moirés, and taffetas, especially those with highly decorative designs, are regarded as gauche today. It was a fine room, but it needs simplification to meet today's standards.

913 ☞ Get rid of the tapestries. I wouldn't throw them out, because they'll be popular again. Just now they're not. People react violently against them, but the sort of guests you have would never admit it. Next, if you are really anxious to have a décor in keeping with the times, cover up the chaise-caning. This is very, very bad today. All right, fashion is a silly thing, but don't blame me. I didn't invent it; I'm just reporting! Now take the Chinese portraits and scrolls out of their black frames and reframe them with bamboo. If you want to salvage a collection of really good furniture you



might reupholster in simpler fabrics and have the wood refinished "natural." A much cheaper and quicker way to achieve that present-day look would be to use white paint on the wood. This is not urged, especially if the furniture is antique. It is simply an expedient which each generation has used to ameliorate the furniture of its parents or grandparents. The following generation laboriously removes the paint.

921 ☞ You'd be all for that white paint idea. (See above.) You're smart and up to date. You'll buy Monarchial (in its Provincial form) in light gray or white, or, if you fall heir to it, you'll paint it. Your shortcomings, if any, will probably be in the direction of too much modernization. If you lean toward Directoire or

Empire you'll go too far with the black and white and red and blue.

922 ☞ Try to confine yourself to pretty authentic forms. Without a great deal of study you'll do badly if you merely try to capture the spirit of the Monarchial style. You'll be safer if you pick one of the recognized French periods and stick to it. Go easy on the fancy fabrics, though.

923 ☞ In the introduction to this series I spoke of the fact that there are good and bad French rooms with very few in-betweens. Your French room will almost surely be bad. To raise it to mediocrity, stick to one period as outlined in the interior decorating books. Or give the style up in favor of something less apt to go sour on you.

931 ☞ I think you'll do well with French. It will be a French such as Marie Antoinette never dreamed of, but it will be an acceptable modern version. Too florid for many people's taste, however.

932 ☞ You like things rich but you haven't the taste to get away with it. Call in a decorator. You do deserve a word of praise for picking a style and sticking to it, but you'll produce a French libertine's dream if you're let loose in a Monarchial showroom.

933 ☞ Monarchial is a style which was developed for luxury-loving queens. You may be luxury loving but you're not a queen. Furthermore, to be blunt, you haven't a queen's taste. In your innocence you'll make a logical, but critical, mistake—and lots of minor ones. First, you'll feel that the height of taste is matching sets of furniture or suites. These were once not only acceptable but the thing. Ridiculous as it may seem, they are now only a thing. Since the antique craze bit America fifty to seventy-five years ago, suites have come to be looked on as probably new and therefore vulgar. (Antiques have a way of getting broken up; sets are hard to find.) There's nothing wrong with a set; it

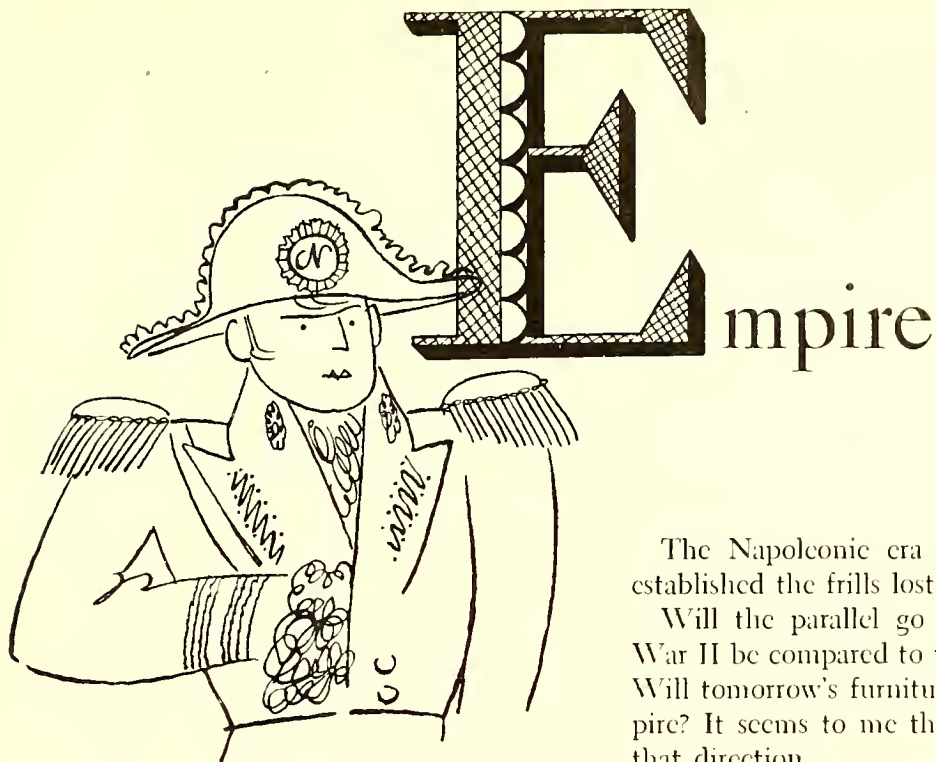


This is how modern decorators tie Monarchial in with Functional. Louis XV style mirror—modern lamp. It's a strain, but a decorator can always manage.

appeals to one's instinctive love of order; it's logical. And God knows a new thing should be more valuable than an old thing. But there's no logic in a trend. And at present the trend set by the antique lovers is toward individual pieces.

The minor mistakes will add up to another critical one—you'll buy cheap accessories and you'll add dolls won at carnivals because you can't resist anything fancy.

On the personal side you are entirely too old to dye your hair bright red.



Before 1789 there had been free interchange of ideas between countries in the matter of furniture design. But several countries had evolved very distinctive styles of their own.

The Revolution focused the eyes of the world upon France. The first modern rebellion of the common man was under way and the scene had shifted from America. Anything French became intensely interesting to the world at large in the same way that Russia's doings loom importantly today. The furniture which France produced in the next thirty years was the criterion for the civilized world. Two periods are easily recognized: Directoire (1789-1804) and Empire (1804-15).

It is interesting to note the parallelism of history and design as they repeat themselves. Let us consider the lush days of the Louis as comparable to the excesses of the Gay Nineties (which really ended in 1914 with World War I). Both scenes were played against very rich backgrounds in a peaceful world.


The Revolution and World War I each ushered in a period when furniture was stripped of non-essentials and "streamlined."

The Napoleonic era (Empire period) re-established the frills lost in the Revolution.

Will the parallel go further? Can World War II be compared to the Directoire period? Will tomorrow's furniture be fancy—like Empire? It seems to me that there is a trend in that direction.

Empire was chosen to represent the classic styles which Directoire and Empire engendered throughout the world: Regency in England, Biedermeier in Germany, Federal in America. Directoire (similar but plainer) is not shown.

Decorators in America have just concluded the Empire revival but it is still very high style. Like Georgian and French Monarchial styles, it seems destined to inspire designers of Safe contemporary pieces for a long time to come.

1011  Most fashionable use for Empire (or Directoire) today is as a point of departure for a modern room. The results cannot be too highly praised. The adroit use of rare and contrasting woods was one of the methods by which Directoire designers solved the problem of making relatively simple furniture without falling into the error of monotony. They used mahogany, Amboina, and fruit woods in the same pieces. Good modern designers sometimes drop their iconoclastic attitude and permit contrasts to creep in. When they don't, it is possible to mix light modern pieces with dark old ones to give character to a room. Empire draperies, first used to simulate the interior of

a Roman tent; large American Federal eagles in gilt; classic patterns on the floor; neoclassic columns and motifs, when blended with Functional, seem to have been designed today, rather than one hundred and fifty years ago. This is the sort of taste you have. It is excellent.

1012 ☞ The preceding paragraph applies to you but you will not bring off a modern Directoire room quite so well. The pieces used in the test to illustrate Empire were chosen for their unmistakable Empire stamp. They are too fancy for today's trend. They may be too fancy for you, too, but you *could* be guilty of using them. You'd be mighty safe and you'd have a very expensive room but number 1011's room will be more daring and better (for today). You are still (for my money) one of the two or three most fastidious types represented in these analyses.

1013 ☞ For a person with poor sophistication you picked exceedingly well. This puts you several notches above others in your taste bracket who selected other furniture. Be very careful when you decorate. One can be well within the "rules" for Empire décor and still emerge from the wallpaper litter and the paint pots with a room that looks like a 1935 night club. Too much black and white and red and blue do not constitute an Empire room. And broad stripes are traditional but becoming passé. If your furniture is heavy with brass, use a light hand on the décor. Wallpaper friezes are coming back. You'd do well to consider them, but a classic wallpaper is better with Directoire than with Empire. The latter provides practically all the decoration a room needs!

1021 ☞ No question about your sophistication. But by an odd contradiction your sense

From antiques like this and on the opposite page the Empire designers derived part of their

classic inspiration. Note animals on headboard and ungulate feet and legs.



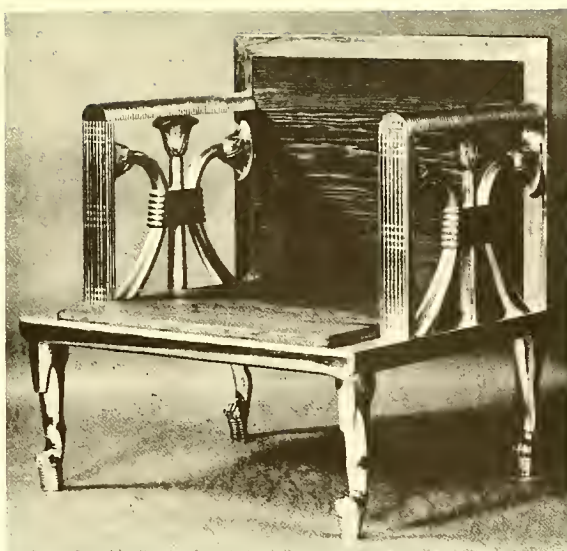
of design and balance is bad. Get help with the placing of the furniture. Read the preceding paragraphs!

1022 ☞ Did you know that the most used colors in Empire rooms were brilliant yellow, bright blue, royal purple, emerald green, and burgundy? Do you cringe a little? Good! I mentioned them so you wouldn't feel too sure of yourself when you started to do an Empire room right out of a book! Better go and look at an Empire room as reconstructed by today's less ebullient decorators. Lots of modifications are necessary to do such a room for today's taste. You haven't the ability to do it yourself.

1023 ☞ The outlook is not too good. You've a little less taste than 1022, above. I'm afraid you'll be satisfied if a chair has a lyre in its back. Modern chairs with lyres are getting pretty corny. I'd read the paragraph directed at 1011 and try to achieve a modern Directoire room. But not without a decorating magazine at hand!

1031 ☞ Yours is a rather remarkable category. It's hard to conceive of great sophistication and a choice of Empire going hand in hand with such bad basic taste. You live, in a big city, read the best books, and go to the best plays and exhibitions. You are in a class with a musician who reads music well, but when he plays, player-piano music comes out.

1032 ☞ Don't buy any tables which look like big drums. Watch out for a tendency toward cheap tôle and reproduction chairs which bear arrows crossed in the backs. No black-and-white linoleum radiating from the center of the room, please! Step into the foyer of any apartment building erected between 1930 and 1940. See what we mean? Looks like an apartment-house foyer, doesn't it? And aren't you



Reproduction of an armchair used by Queen Hetep-Heres, mother of Cheops, 4,946 years ago. This and the illustration opposite from Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

tired of it? If you are, you may advance yourself several paragraphs.

1033 ☞ Did you pick any Borax along with your Empire? Confuse the two? There's a dangerous line between the most ornate of the Empire (like the secretary, for example) and the worst of modern Borax. Most of the Empire and Directoire lovers made their selections with reservations, wishing their vote to be cast for the style, but deploring some of my examples. I'll bet you loved every one you picked! They are, for the most part, too fancy. Good materials and good workmanship please discriminating people. The latter are never, never impressed by too apparent elegance. Your taste is very bad. This fact is not particularly ameliorated by your choice of a classic style. I don't believe for one minute that you knew it was classic!

mellow



Have you ever read one of those books on "How I Collected My Lovely Old Things"? Have you thrilled as the author (probably a Hokinson type) confessed to the barefaced swindle of a dealer who didn't quite know what he was selling? Have you ever committed such a swindle? If so, you are an addict of the Mellow (or the Patrician—closely allied but more expensive, as you have noticed). And you are quite aware of the fact that antiques are unique among commodities in that they don't depreciate in value as you use them. That's advantage number one.

That your collection is flexible, permitting the selling or trading of pieces that don't fit in favor of ones that do, is advantage number two.

The third advantage is that you're really in love with the things you own. The world you choose to live in is mellow and friendly. There's no hard glitter, no sharp conflict of patterns, no unfamiliar color schemes, no never-before-experienced surfaces. There's no glitter—but there's a warm glow where the firelight loses itself in the beautiful complexities of well-worn but well-cared-for native wood. And a soft twinkle where candlelight dances in the friendly Sandwich glass. Your world is small and low-ceilinged and snug, like the cabin of a yawl at anchor within sight of Town Wharf in Manchester harbor.

The kindly things you own weren't bought in two days' frenzied shopping. They settled into their places, one by one, with a sigh of pleasure as they were rescued from the clutches

of roadside dealers or unappreciative heirs. There's a pleasant association connected with each one. This one pleased Great-grandmother as a bride and no one ever had the heart to treat it badly or discard it. So it was well loved through the years and shows it. That one still gives off the remembered fragrance of autumn leaves burning in the still haze of the October day long ago when you found it squatting unhappily on a country dealer's lawn. The little depression in the middle of the Windsor's comb perpetuates the memory of a bad spot that needed more sandpaper. Some other person's grandmother loved this chair but it's part of you now because you added your love and elbow grease.

That's the way you feel about old things.

You're very fortunate in your choice of real Early American furniture. But you're even luckier if you have enough to fill out so much as a room full of authentic items. One of the disadvantages to your sort of taste is that the finer items are off the market. They've been collected. The ignorant dealers and impecunious old ladies don't exist any more. Beginners are forced to buy things a dealer wouldn't have had in his shop twenty-five years ago. Chairs which began life heavily painted and decorated are scraped to reveal a miscellany of woods.

And patina is hardly the word to use for an erstwhile cobbler's bench pitted and scarred by less romantic instruments than Grandpa's baby feet and toy ax! Especially if the refinishing has been limited to the usual three heavy coats of orange shellac without benefit of oil and pumice.

Scarcity is one limitation; there are others. Discomfort, for instance. This is an effete age, and Great-grandmother's was not. Her furniture has charm today. But its function, like a cat's, is to make a house look cozy. It doesn't help to make it cozy. For every chair which stands in an Early American living room there should be one you can sit in. Every corner cupboard (once useful) can now be duplicated by practical cupboards in the kitchen to hold the dishes. Spinning wheels are silly. And you fall over them. Great-grandmother's beds were made for midgits only and must be rebuilt. And all of the furniture squeaks and groans. Yes, it does. Don't tell me. I've owned it. I have procured it in the days when you could still rob a dealer. I even learned the antique lover's classic reply to disparagers: "It'll never break if it squeaks." I used this reply until I was convinced otherwise.

Then there's the matter of appropriateness or congruity. Early American (or any peasant furniture) looks out of place in a modern city apartment. And modern city dwellers look out of place in a peasant room. You have to live and dress down to homey old furniture. You don't think so? Then why are you wearing that dirndl? Or that tweed with the burs woven in?

1111 ☞ You've been reading E. B. White and Louis Bromfield. And now you've bought yourself a hundred acres of run-down land with an old farmhouse.

Or maybe it all started because you discovered you like a pipe or wear a culotte well.

Or (possibly) you've been out there in Pleasant Valley all the time.

In any case, I dare you to tell me that you have not:

- (a) *once lived in the big city*
- (b) *always worked there*
- (c) *maintained a town house.*

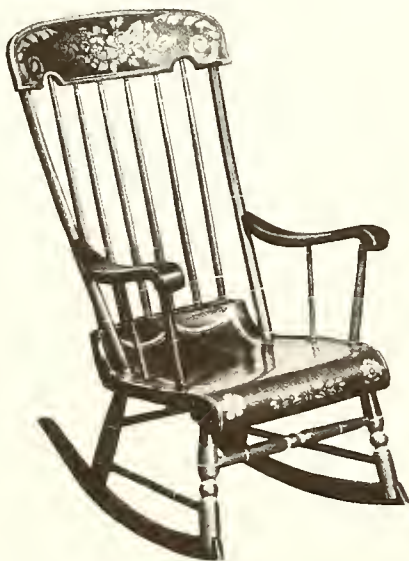
It's out of character for you to be rustic, and explained only by one of the guesses ventured above. Your taste is too exquisite to be inhibited by the limited color schemes and unimaginative décor of "ye olde homestead." You don't need to be told that apple green and white ruffles are lovely with maple, or that red curtains are charming in the kitchen. You've done some daring things like lining closets with old box paper. Could be you've a cigar-store Indian, a harness maker's wooden horse, or a cast-iron deer on the premises. I'll bet there's one room with a floor-width rag carpet. But I'll also bet there's an Empire drawing room in your life!

1112 ☞ You've had your treasures quite a while and probably are living with them now in some smart suburb. They're just as smart as the suburb, too, because your basic taste is excellent. You've used almost faultless discrimination in assembling your furniture. Where necessary for comfort, there's a conventional modern touch. Sometimes, as in the case of the sofa, the inspired selection of the right cretonne quarrels with tradition and makes the room. Your lampshades are more chic than their Sandwich bases. Your floors are wide planked with natural or spatter finish and embellished with swell hooked rugs and shrewdly selected carpet. Missing from your home is the devastating final decorator's touch: the enormous pink bow on the curtains; the giant mural-size photostat of a Currier & Ives print; the broad gestures intended to say: "Look, we're quaint as hell but it's really all a lark." It's just as well, because you have a home to live in and enjoy, a home blessed with the comfort of familiar anonymity. Into it the stranger steps with as much pleasure as he is likely to feel away from his own home—perhaps more. As a favor to me, will you provide him with a decent bed?

1113 ☞ Your house is settled. It's doubtful if you'll make any drastic changes to modify its ageless charm. You've lived outside the big city many years—possibly always. Most likely you're on the better side of the tracks in a large town. Your home does not have flash.

This is not remarkable for one so mature. A home with "flash" would ill become you and you know it. It's been years since you felt the necessity of impressing anyone with your cleverness or your taste. But you have both—too much of both to flourish them about. Your things are well chosen, badly organized, and displayed. There's a surprisingly irrelevant chair by the window overlooking the garden. But the garden is a very, very charming one.

1121 ☞ You've been around a lot. You've read lots of books on decorating. You're talented; you're smart, and you know good things. But your gift for organization is lacking. Here's a compromise: you buy the furniture, let someone else help you with the arrangement and the color schemes and (especially) the picture hanging. The result will have the charm you want. It's a little surprising to find one as sophisticated as you mixed up with the quaint; Georgian would seem more to your taste and slightly easier to deal with. It's easier to find, too, and you can afford it. It would be even



Mellow, as a state of mind, transcends time or place. This Victorian Boston rocker is an outgrowth of the Windsor chairs. (The rocker is a relatively late invention.) But it would be at home with much earlier "crude" things.

more in character for you to deal in flashy adaptations of Victorian. That fertile brain of yours is somewhat wasted on so simple a subject as "ye mellow olde peasant."

1122 ☞ Your taste is pretty average by the standards of this book (which are high).

But no one is going to know that from your choice of furniture. Most of what is said of 1132 applies to you, but your chances when decorating are somewhat better. You're well along toward avoiding mediocrity in your likes but will go further if you develop your courage. Do one of the flamboyant daring things you've thought of, and do it by yourself. If the effect is uncertain, ask advice of an honest friend. If it didn't come off, the situation can usually be saved. Walls too bright? Don't repaint them all. Try dark paint on the one that gets the most light. Wallpaper too gaudy? Mix light gray water paint in a spray gun, attach the gun to your vacuum (if it's that kind), and gray it down. Chances are you'll get a handsome and unique effect. Got a big tin tray? Want a coffee table? Build four square legs and a frame and put your tray on it. An old iron bucket in the salvaged base of a world-map globe makes a swell catchall. For tonight's homework, write down ten ideas like this. Then write, "I can be original and charming" one hundred times.

1123 ☞ Well, your basic taste is not bad so you won't commit any horrors. You haven't the confidence for that. But I'm very much afraid the dealers will sell you bargains. And I hate to see your place after that smattering of taste has come in contact with a few facts on antiques—and a dealer.

Yes, it's true that an honest piece of new and therefore unused piece of glass or china has an unscratched bottom. That doesn't mean that every unfamiliar piece with a scratched bottom is an antique. Cod-liver oil bottles in the shape of a fish grace thousands of mantels, their bottoms just as rough as all get out (but still smelling of fish inside). And people who don't drink prune juice buy the bottles it was sold in yesterday. There's always a bit of sand-

paper in or around a small-time antique dealer's shop.

1131 ☞ Just because you've moved out with the rustic smart set doesn't mean you have to be mellow. The setting you contemplate is not a thing you feel.

Have you ever heard of tone-deaf artists, color-blind musicians, or writers who can't add? You could be one of the latter. You're very of-the-moment. You know the value of everything. And you can afford the best of it but you would do better at decorating if you went "strange-new-world" where things are not valued for their charm so much as for the ingenuity with which they solve living problems.

All this is not to say that you haven't the knowledge or skill to assemble a fine group of maple and pine.

You can and maybe you will. But you'll need someone to knit it into a home, and it's doubtful if you'll like it.

1132 ☞ Your choice of mellow peasant furniture is a wise one. Your taste is not for sophisticated things and your decorating ability is notable for its absence. You couldn't pick a field more suited to you and your preferences. You will avoid banalities very well. This is partly because you have a fair idea of what is good, but primarily because most old things are also good. The better designers made things well enough to last and the well-made horrors were usually thrown out long ago. You'll do well to get help when buying and you'll really need it when you decorate. If you buy by yourself try to avoid the purchase of charming but useless things. Old wool carders are well in a museum of archaic industries. Try to pick a period. Don't go all over the lot.

1133 ☞ There's this to be said. You have an enormous amount of fun ahead of you. You're at the stage which most of our smartest antique dealers were twenty-five years ago. And learning about a thing you love is the most delightful occupation in the world.

Your basic taste is bad and you have little acquired knowledge. But, bless you, you do



Mellow originals and reproductions still exist here and there. This is a "lazy Susan" table made of old wood.



This Mellow room attempts (successfully) to be the missing link between Mellow and Patrician. It "grades up" via the "sporting" route. "The Hunt" carries an aristocratic connotation which best serves to bridge the gap.

have taste anyway. You love our mellow, splendid native folk craft. Now lean back and let me tell you. After all, I'm old enough to be your father.

First, don't buy anything you can't put to use. Rack your brain if you like it and try to

visualize a use for it; but no matter how cheap it is and how authentic it is, don't buy it till you know you can use it. That is, unless you know a lot of other collectors of country-type antiques and you're quite sure they're not so shrewd as you are and twice as eager.



victorian



Fashion trends usually seem aimless and impromptu but students of such matters have pointed out certain easily recognized rhythms and explained them. For example, a tendency to immodesty in women's dress seems to follow periods of war. After the French Revolution and some time after the American Civil War extreme décolleté prevailed, to the probable embarrassment of ladies listed as type one on the corsetiere's chart. The period following World War I offered a different provocation to men: short skirts. These manifestations have been ascribed to the natural concomitant to war—shortage of men. As the competition gets keener, the gals are driven to harder selling efforts and better window dressing.

Another often-noted but seldom-explained trend is perennial. As you have probably suspected, it concerns home furnishings.

Rhetorical question: Why should furniture "over one hundred years old" be so eagerly sought out and carefully preserved?

Every so often a style hitherto condemned as completely lacking in taste stages a comeback. If it was bad for years, how can it become good, so to speak, overnight?

A hasty answer might be that art is not so absolute a field as science, where two and two go on tiresomely making four throughout the centuries. A considered and more final answer awaits research by a careful student. Mean-

while, the author, who is not a careful student by any means, offers the following observations as a possible solution:

One hundred years was mentioned as the age at which furniture usually becomes attractive. It is necessary, at once, to examine this premise. The fact is that most of the antiques to which one hundred years are attributed were made only seventy-five years ago. You see, a hundred years sounds much better to the casual owner of one of Grandma's chairs. He has guaranteed its age so many times that he believes it.

The point is that it was Grandma's. Not the hateful, shabby, unfashionable furniture of which he was ashamed as he grew up but the strangely romantic furniture left to Mother when Grandma died. He received an impression that it was old, as a child, but never verified its exact age. When he, in turn, fell heir to it, he assigned to it the usual one hundred years because that's a nice round number.

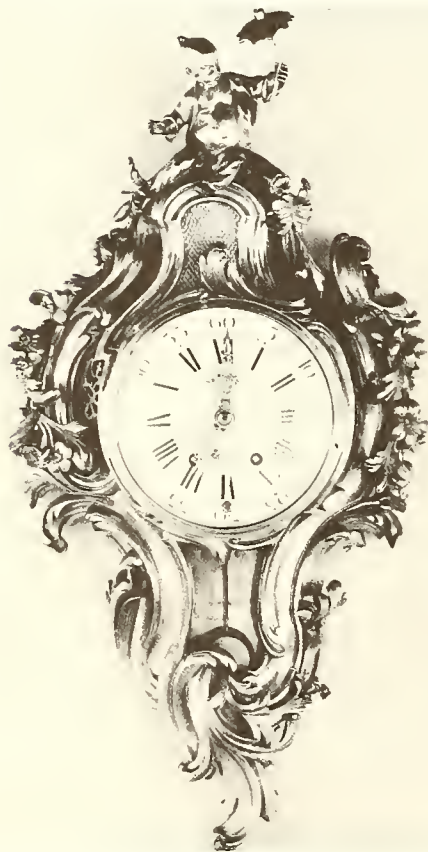
Grandma's furniture, or something older, seems to be the criterion of an antique. Anything more recent (up to within ten years of today) is a revolting manifestation of a crass materialistic age when art was non-existent. This point of view is closely akin to that of the recurring oldster who shakes his head over each

new crop of children and gravely remarks, "I don't know what this generation is coming to." (This generation being no more uncouth than he was at the same age.)

With this background in mind, the conservative element among antique collectors should have been prepared for the rush for Victorian things which broke out in the East ten years ago. Grandma's things had come of age.

Long before that Midwest collectors had provided the seaboard with plenty of warning and an ample market for Grandma's better pieces, still undesirable in the East. The warning was ignored. The rising tide of sophistication west of the Alleghenies was put down to a desire for background on the part of a people whose pre-Victorian décor was non-existent. (Or, at best,

A Louis XV clock and a Victorian mirror are shown together here to emphasize the close relationship between the two periods. The mirror is reproduced upside down (as if it made any difference).



no more pretentious than could be scratched on a stone pipe bowl.)

Collecting Grandma's furniture while Grandma was still alive put the Midwest well up on the East. (Buyers who have worked in either Marshall Field's or Robinson's, and also in Macy's, say that this is not the only sign of culture in the West. According to some, the West is far more style conscious than New York and distinctly more sophisticated in its taste for paintings.)

The furniture collected by the West and now being reproduced for the tardy East is lumped under the all-inclusive term Victorian, but it had as many phases as that of the eighteenth century. Although seldom classified by maker (as was Georgian, Chippendale, Hepplewhite, et cetera), several distinct styles existed between 1830 and 1900. Prominent are Butcher-Federal (really early Victorian, heavy, with ogee curves predominating); the revival of Louis XV (rococo—revolting); a simplified version of the same (charming); a revival of



Gothic inspired by the sentimental novelists of the time, Scott and Hugo; and subsequent forms (including Eastlake) which shrewd dealers are probably storing in barns and warehouses even now, against a firm market in 1950!

Early Victorian furniture was made of rosewood, mahogany, and ebony. During the Civil War these were understandably difficult to obtain. This circumstance may have given rise to the popularity of black walnut, criterion of excellence till about 1880, when cherry became important. Native gray marble was used with the walnut. Subsequent use of this marble contributed to the low opinion of it held by many people, including myself. If I achieve the age of an antique, I shall never forget the repugnance I felt when, as a boy, I washed my hands in my rich uncle George's washbasin. It was gray native marble.

Victorian furniture is rich and opulent. It was in use in a day which catered to the creature comforts of man. Diamond Jim Brady rode in a more luxurious parlor car than exists on any vaunted modern streamliner. He ate six dozen oysters as an appetizer against a background of black walnut panels, red plush, and rich carpet, not to mention voluptuous paintings of overstuffed nudes. The gas chandeliers were bright with daily polishings (as were the cuspidors) and the servitors were genial.

Although well known as a non-gourmand, I'm sure I could handle two dozen oysters as a mere prelude to lobster and steak in the atmosphere of the old Thirty-fourth Street Waldorf. At today's Park Avenue version, or in Chicago's "Pump Room," or on the "Top of the Mark" in Frisco, I'll be satisfied with a fruit salad and coffee.

1211 ☞ You collected it all yourself because such items as were given to you by well-meaning aunts were not suitable or had been stripped and disastrously renovated. You started (I think) when heavily fringed slipper chairs first made their appearance in Greenwich Village shops. Then you added a whatnot because it was currently the most-ridiculed Victorian item and you wanted to prove you

were not kidding about the chairs! It got laughs and comment. Encouraged, you brought the Currier & Ives prints out from the Early American bedroom. Next came the rococo sofa. Stripped of its horsehair and redone in tufted pink silk, it was a sensation. Blackamoors came much later. They were eventually disposed of to a decorator, and are now in the entrance foyer of a well-known New York commercial photographer. There, added to the black-and-salmon marbleized walls and the white-painted iron garden furniture, they shriek class, but with a capital K. You still have the wax flowers in the glass dome. You kept a few of the earlier "gag" Victorian too, but it's going slowly and being replaced by pickled and doctored former horrors and by really good things (undoctored). You are Helen Hayes or Charles MacArthur.

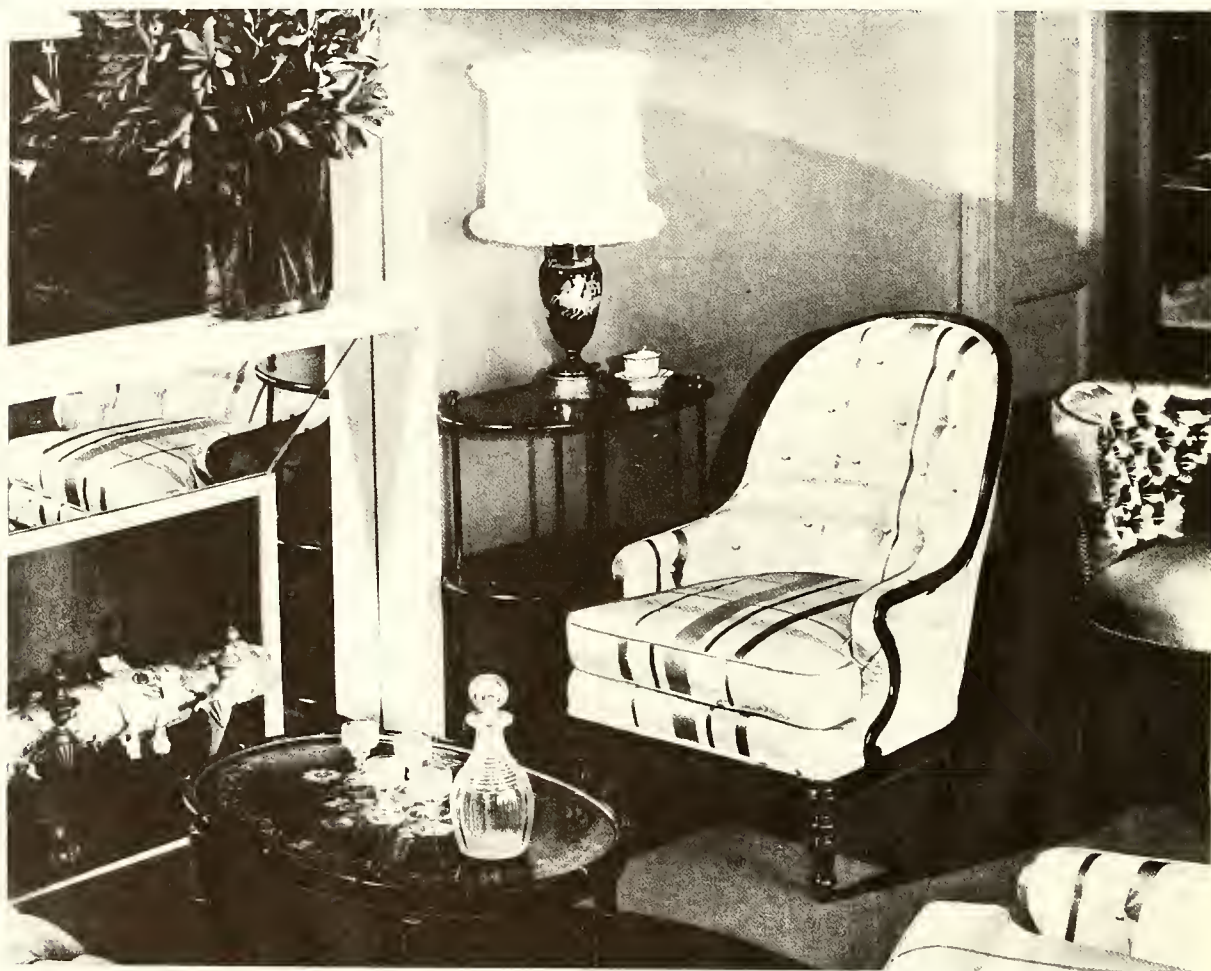
1212 ☞ It probably never was a kidding matter with you. For this reason there has never been a necessity to eliminate items which were wonderful until the window dressers made them vulgar. You have inherited, or been given, things which weren't bad enough to pickle nor good enough to copy in papier-mâché and lacquer. That's a break you may not have deserved quite so much as the clever, imaginative people of the paragraph preceding, but you got it. Now you're in luck. There's no turnover. You're going to hang onto all that walnut and marble. Someday, when Paisley shawls are recognized again, you're going to be able to bring yours out of hiding and I'll bet it has a rare blue or white center, too, you lucky and (fairly) deserving people!

Your home, by an easily understood paradox, will be appreciated by more connoisseurs than that of more discriminating people.

1213 ☞ I wish I had that mahogany sleigh bed or that Hudson River school painting. Not that you have (necessarily) either one! You have, however, some equally fine things mixed up with a pretty average collection of 1925 traditional furniture and some refugees from the mellow or warming-pan and spinning-wheel department. You'd put rush-seated Hitchcock

chairs next to hand-carved rosewood because they were both made in the 1850s. And you use as a background to both a wallpaper popular in the 1920s. The room will be charming, however, and well arranged. Your basic taste is good but your knowledge of a little known period of furniture is sketchy. Too late for you to learn—and what matter? Many fine old friends regard your home as priceless. I'd like it too.

1221 ☞ The Victorian items in your home are there to lend authenticity to an otherwise overdone and somewhat flashy impression of the era as seen through a Hollywood decorator's stereopticon. You probably chose nearly as many Baroque items as Victorian. That's not bad—now—but it won't last. You're paying a heavy price for a flash. A steady glow might be of more value. You'll have to redecorate, but it's quite possible that you'll be able to afford



Even Victorian can be blended with Functional when a department-store decorator is bent on selling merchandise to the puzzled possessor of a little of each. In this setting are: a Functional vase; a lamp adapted from a Greek vase (sort of Empire); a *tôle* tray mounted on Sheraton bamboo legs (sort of Chinese); a (sort of) Waterford decanter; a Baroque (tufted) chair; a (somewhat) Mo-

narchial table; Chippendale fire irons; a Borax birch log (please leave the birches to grow!) and, dominating the whole setting, two Victorian (type) chairs with plaid upholstery. (The Victorians did not use plaid for upholstery!) Somehow the whole thing is quite successful! An object lesson: if you tie things together you can get away with murder.

it when the time comes. Meanwhile, you really have quite an establishment!

1222 ☞ I suggest that you develop an iron will and stop buying inexpensive but commonplace things. A whatnot should be a good whatnot unless you have a plan for accumulating semi-antiques (at present undesirable) toward a smackeroo décor in 1955. In that case do buy the unwanted things, but be consistent. Right now you are probably all over the lot and accumulating items which are as inconsistent as though they were created years apart (which they probably were). Your program for getting rid of the Safe items over a period of years is a good one, since the non-antiques you own are pretty poor things.

1223 ☞ Unleavened by any good modern touches and basically poor in quality, your furniture hasn't a very good chance of capturing a prize at the annual open-house and visiting day of the Women's Guild. You gotta do something. Either have good antiques or modernize poor ones adroitly. This requires money; or skill and daring. Lay out one or develop the other!

1231 ☞ "Well—say!" or "Gee-zus!" That's

how visitors will react, depending on the sort of visitors you entertain, that is. Their glance will fall first upon the chandelier and rightly so. For you, if you run true to type, will have salvaged a splendid specimen of the true Diamond Jim gaslight vintage. From there they will be free to goggle at the blackamoors and the tables supported by griffins and dragons and the circular divans surmounted by begonia-bearing wirework. My! This really is a joint. Are you sure it's a home? Not the Ship's Grill at 400 East Fifty-seventh Street? New York?

1232 ☞ Now look here, Aunt Margaret! Do you remember when your nephew was tracking down good Victorian things? Remember how you used to laugh that sardonic little laugh with the sneer in it? Well, what is this I find in your living room? Your mother's Sandwich glass chicken? Grandma Smith's walnut lampstand? It's a little late, isn't it?

1233 ☞ People have been telling you for years that Victorian things had charm. You hated them until yesterday, when you discovered that Grandma's furniture was valuable. Grab what you can, chum; it really is, but in a different way.

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How good is your taste? main
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